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ABSTRACT

Findings from descriptions of successful practice and studies of school effectiveness are presented in this collection of readings, which provide a background of the rationale and recommendations for implementing school improvement. The readings also serve as a detailed reference for school improvement teams who have participated in training institutes presented by the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development. The readings were developed collaboratively by practitioners and school improvement facilitators. The first narrative describes the origins of effective schools research and defines the criteria for an effective school in terms of quality and equity. The second narrative describes the research-based school characteristics and processes that correlate with quality and equity of student outcomes. School and district leadership behaviors necessary to initiate school improvement processes are examined in narrative 3. The fourth narrative is concerned with creating and communicating a mission for change. The fifth and sixth narratives examine the organizational structure and processes necessary to support school improvement at the district and building levels. Strategies to utilize data in the school improvement process are identified in the final narrative. References accompany each narrative. (LMI)

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A Handbook for Implementing School Improvement

Executive Editor
Edie Holcomb

Contributing Editor
Lydia L. McCue

Chapter Contributors

Richard L. Andrews
Beverly A. Bancroft
Aurora Chase
Robert Eaker
William J. Gauthier, Jr.
Edie L. Holcomb
Barbara C. Jacoby
Ann B. Madison
David P. Meaney
H. W. "Bud" Meyers
Stephen K. Miller
M. John O'Connell
Marie A. Parker
Patrick Proctor
William D. Rauhauser
Claudia L. Risnes
Joan Shoemaker
Robert E. Sudlow
Rufus Young, Jr.

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PREFACE

Important findings from descriptions of successful practice and studies of effective schools, effective instruction, and organizational change have been presented in numerous sources. They have created keen interest in the internal renewal of educational institutions. Access to a coordinated set of readings providing elaboration on how to implement those findings has been comparatively limited. Providing background history and rationale along with detailed recommendations for implementing school improvement, this set of background readings can assist practitioners and the public in understanding school improvement efforts based on Effective Schools Research. As part of the training program of the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, it also serves as a detailed reference for school improvement teams who have participated in Training Institutes presented by NCESRD.

These readings were developed through a collaborative process involving multiple practitioners and school improvement facilitators, who have discussed, written, reflected, reviewed, provided feedback, and contributed examples and sample materials. We gratefully acknowledge their input, their hard work, and their cooperation in producing a clear, concise document. It is not possible to include all that was submitted. We thank them for their contributions, and accept responsibility for any omissions.

Special recognition is given to Angela Smithmier, NCESRD Project Assistant, for editing and research verification. Quality technical and administrative support were provided by Janet Short and Fran Dalton, who unfailingly entered refinement after refinement. Valuable contributions were also made by project assistants Ruferse Escoe-Lewis, Carol Johnson, John Nash and Marsha Ware. Finally, these materials would not have been produced without editing, writing, leadership and additions by Edie Holcomb, who invested time and knowledge in seeing to their completion.

Like the school improvement process itself, continuous and ongoing, this handbook is being continually refined with new insights and contributions as we learn from practice and research.

Kent D. Peterson

Kent D. Peterson, Director
May, 1991

NARRATIVE 1

CREATING A MOTIVE FOR CHANGE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CREATING A MOTIVE FOR CHANGE

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Narrative 1

Creating a Motive for Change

Goals and Objectives

Goals:

(1) Participants will be able to articulate an explicit rationale for improving schools and express awareness of trends and factors which create a need for improving schools.

(2) Participants will be able to describe origins of the Effective Schools Research (ESR) and define the criteria for an effective school in terms of quality and equity.

Objectives:

(1) To consider historical and demographic factors which provide a context for reform in American schooling.

(2) To describe various educational reform initiatives and their potential to impact quality and equity of student outcomes.

(3) To describe the premises, attributes, and strategic assumptions associated with an Effective Schools Research-based improvement process.

(4) To identify characteristics that distinguish an ESR-based improvement process from other improvement initiatives.

(5) To explain the definition of an effective school in terms of student outcomes that reflect quality and equity.

(6) To provide an overview of the studies known as "Effective Schools Research" and their findings.

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The text was reviewed by NCESRD Cadre members, Ben Birdsell, Aurora Chase, Beverly Bancroft, Dick Andrews, and David Meaney.

Initial work on this narrative was begun under the direction of Larry Lezotte, Barbara Taylor and Lydia McCue, while the Center for Effective Schools was at Okemos, Michigan. Additional editing was completed by Edie Holcomb, Associate Director, National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kent D. Peterson, Director.

Introduction

Changing an institution is heavily dependent upon the degree to which the individuals in that institution feel a *compelling* reason to modify both their personal 5 behavior and those of the organization in which they work. Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* (1987) cite the leader's ability to "challenge the process" toward a new and better way of doing things as critical to the change process. Certainly, a first step in "challenging the process" is creating a *vivid picture* of the compelling need. The purpose of this module is to create that vivid picture by describing the moral, demographic and economic rationale for school change and by setting forth a rationale for using the effective schools approach when initiating that change.

Throughout history, great ideas have enabled individuals to endure unbelievable hardships in order to accomplish something believed greater than themselves. Having experienced a greater awareness of the need to establish an alternative vision for public schools, it is hoped that leaders will be convinced to align themselves with these ideals and develop the attitude that school improvement is not an option.

"*Schools* differ; *schooling* is everywhere very much the same" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 264, emphasis in original). Goodlad's observation provides the context for questions about the origins and popularity of effective schools programs:

> If *schooling* exhibits such sameness, why are some *schools* so much more effective than others?
>
> Why did it take so long (until early 1970's) to realize that studying particularly effective schools was a useful strategy for understanding how schools work?
>
> How is the Effective Schools movement related to school reform in the 1980s?
>
> How is the Effective Schools approach similar to and different from other models of change and school improvement?
>
> Can conditions in society be changed to increase the odds that most schools will become effective?
>
> What are the prospects and conditions that help virtually all schools become effective?

Given widespread resistance to change, what is the possibility that your school or district can become more effective?

What are the moral, practical, and demographic imperatives for your school or district becoming involved in an effective schools improvement program?

The questions above form the basis of this article, i.e., what are the primary motivations for change? This is not idle speculation. Both practical experience and the research literature strongly suggest that change is problematic; that institutions and people are resistant to change; that even when organizations change, long term institutionalization often does not occur; and that the extra efforts, trials, and uncertainties of change are frequently not perceived as worth the payoff. These realities are well known in schools. All too familiar are the delaying and non-cooperative behaviors associated with common platitudes such as, "This, too, shall pass"; "The more things change, the more they stay the same"; and the "Shut the door veto."

How are Schools Alike, Yet Different?

But schools do change. "Turn around" schools have been documented, and successful effective schools programs are spreading rapidly. Central to this narrative is an emphasis on the contradictions and tensions that exist in schools, i.e., the continuing impetus for reform vs. simultaneous organizational pressures for stability. All schools experience these dynamic tensions, but each school is unique in how it resolves these opposing forces and how quickly it responds to perceived pressures for improvement. One of the central questions here is: Why did effective schools respond in ways that produced effectiveness for virtually all students when most schools have not managed to produce such results?

Numerous scholars (Callahan, 1962; Cuban, 1984; Hampel, 1986; Sizer, 1985; Tyack, 1974) have confirmed Goodlad's (1984) insights about the sameness of schooling: dominated by teacher talk; student passivity; low level fact-based recall; discrete and often disconnected behavioral objectives; convergent right-answer emphases; a response to student diversity based upon differentiating curricula for different ability groups rather than individualizing instruction to enable all students to master common objectives; an over-reliance on basal readers and textbooks; and the relative isolation of teachers from one another even in the same school.

Yet as Miles (1981) explains, each school is unique in terms of faculty, student body, and community. These unique local conditions interact with the properties common to all schools, e.g., political socialization, instruction in the basic skills, sorting and selecting large cohorts of students into stratified levels in the occupational and social class hierarchy, and social control in the context of compulsory attendance (cf, Franklin, 1986). Schools also function within a framework of similar governance structures. Local control at the district level varies considerably in terms of resources available and priorities among specific goals. State and federal regulations both limit and mandate certain local regulations and initiatives. Thus each school represents a unique resolution of multiple forces in terms of its ethos, climate, and structure. Despite the instructional sameness of these building sites (schools "feel" like schools and are different from churches or businesses), we now know that the response to these forces in some schools is considerably more effective than in others. Indeed, this knowledge is largely based on the school effectiveness research. By effectiveness, we mean producing measurable learning outcomes that are both high quality and equitably distributed for all students.

Do We Want Effective Schools?

If some schools are effective and if schools are distributed across a continuum of effectiveness, should we (society) not be about the business of ensuring that all schools are effective? Does it not seem reasonable that school reform movements would be focused on bringing about greater effectiveness for all schools (and hence all students)?

The answers to these two questions are a sad comment on society and the political realities within which policymakers and educators operate. Regarding the first of these questions--shouldn't we be involved in school reform--the moral answer is unequivocally "yes." But there is very little evidence in the educational record that priorities have ever focused consistently on effectiveness for all students. The Civil Rights and Effective Schools movements are notable exceptions here, and the passage of PL 94-142 for handicapped children was a major breakthrough for this special needs group. Furthermore, the Title programs of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 were clearly intended to redress inequalities of opportunity.

But the argument can and has been made that the pull-out practices of Title I, the major achievement-oriented section of this bill, have had unintended negative effects that merely perpetuated the disadvantaged conditions of the targeted children. The labeling and stigma associated with identification in a special program frequently offset the gains due to the compensatory instruction (Rist, 1977). More cynical observers have noted the "skinny chicken" phenomenon with respect to tax dollars.[1]

Perhaps more to the point is the reality that the compensatory education program and education in general have been predicated upon a "blaming the victim" view of human nature (Ryan, 1976) consistent with the entire War on Poverty. In this approach, the fault or deficit to be remedied is identified within the individual. Basically a liberal philosophy, the deficit is believed to be the result of the culture of poverty and the deterioration of the family, viz., environmentally caused. This contrasts with and is an improvement over the conservative view that the deficit is genetic and thereby beyond remediation. But even in the liberal version, there is no mistaking the alleged locus of the problem: the individual's cognitive development is lacking or his/her value structure is depraved. And only compensating instruction is believed capable of remedying the deficit or changing lower class and minority values.

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[1] In the "skinny chicken" model, a program is designed so that performance that is defined as successful (e.g., Title I students must progress .8 grade equivalent for every full year in the program) guarantees continued funding, since students meeting program definitions of success will fall further behind, thus ensuring their continued eligibility for the program. (If the chicken is kept skinny, you need to keep feeding it instead of selling it.) On the other hand, if students actually caught up to grade level, i.e., gains greater than 1.0 grade equivalent per year, they would no longer be eligible for funding (more feed) and staff would have to be cut. This is the classic example of a program with negative reward structures versus positive incentives that would provide rewards if the remedial program actually worked (Brookover, Brady, & Warfield, 1981; Kirst, 1979).

The "blaming the victim" approach is consistent with maintenance of the status quo of power and position in the class structure. First, the extension of the professional's helping hand acts as soothing salve for any guilt that liberals may feel regarding conspicuous inequalities. Second, no consideration is given to the possibility that something may be wrong with the wider society (or a particular organization) that might produce such deficits for large numbers of individuals. Since the system is not perceived to be at fault, there is no need to consider changing it and thus no threat to one's own position.

Extending this insight to school programs in general, compensatory education in its predominant pullout mode has had little effect on the continued stratification of students through grouping and tracking. Viewed another way, educational reforms invariably have been "add-ons", leaving the core program of stratified instructional groups untouched (Tyack, Kirst, & Hansot, 1980).

In other words, schools cannot fundamentally reform social structure. Schools are affected only if social structure is changed first.

As for the second question--should school reform efforts focus on equity--a strong case could be made that the initiatives of the 1980s were explicitly focused on reversing any gains in equity and effectiveness that accrued during the 60s and 70s (Apple, 1986; Berman, 1988; Oakes, 1986).

These answers present a dilemma. If school policy and practice in general have not been directed toward making all schools effective, what were they intended to do? And if the intention was something other than equity and effectiveness for all students, then from whence comes the strong push for equity that is inherent in civil rights (exemplified by Brown v. Board of Education, 1954), the Effective Schools movement, and the intention if not results of the War on Poverty?

Very simply, why might a society not be concerned with making schools effective for all students? The economic, demographic, and moral arguments for Effective Schools reform are relevant to this answer.

What is the Perceived Impact of Socioeconomic Factors?

Effective schools are not typical. They are notable exceptions to one of the strongest relationships in all of social science: the correlation between achievement and family background (Coleman, et al., 1966). Put simply, the best predictor of school achievement is the educational, ethnic, and social class background of the student's family. For a school, the aggregate social standing of the students becomes the best predictor. Thus we see the trends of outstanding achievement records in affluent, primarily white suburbs and the distressing drop-out rates and low levels of literacy in impoverished central cities and rural areas.

This is not, as many politicians would have us believe, a recent phenomenon. There has never been a period in which our schools served all children well. But the myth that schools have served as the engine of social mobility and equal opportunity has always been a powerful image for Americans (Greer, 1972; Perkinson, 1977). In fact, the Effective Schools Research clearly demonstrates how difficult and unusual are the circumstances that are needed to maintain high achievement for all students over a long period of time.

The low and non-functional achievement of most disadvantaged students is more typical of the prevailing outcome of a stratified system of schooling. This point cannot be overemphasized. Over a period of time people accommodate to the conditions and role expectations of both the wider society and the organizations in which they work. Structure shapes and constrains behavior which in turn influences beliefs and attitudes. The common functions and properties of schooling noted above reflect social inequalities in society so strongly that virtually all schools react to and mirror the family background characteristics of the student body. For the exceptions, i.e., effective schools where low income students produce high achievement, some unusual set of forces must come into play. Stories of super principals, charismatic leaders, and unusually committed and cooperative staff are common in the case studies of effective schools. Clearly, such responses are possible; turnaround success stories are common as are those of the longer standing effective schools.

The key question here is: Can virtually all schools become effective? Can we make the exception become the rule? Unfortunately, unless we develop a magic wand for producing charisma and superior levels of commitment, there is little chance that most schools will be effective as long as the current structure of schooling remains unchanged (McNeil, 1988).

A second parallel question is: Do we have a choice about making all schools effective? Our position on this is unequivocal. Given changing conditions in society, we have no choice but to make all schools effective for all children. To do otherwise is to forfeit the economic and moral underpinnings that made America great in the past. But the conditions of the past are gone. The schools that "worked" at the turn of the century will simply no longer work effectively today and in the future.

Finally, how do we deal with counter-productive structures of schooling and move toward a more productive model? This has two implications. First, what are the historical factors that shaped our schools? Second, which school conditions are alterable and which are so embedded in the fabric of society that we can do nothing about them?

What Changes Have Occurred in American Schooling?

Schools of today are virtually unchanged from the structures that were developed at the turn of the century. These schools were responses to a series of powerful demographic and social forces that overwhelmed the Common School of the 19th century, and provided a legacy that continues to shape educators' beliefs, attitudes, and practices even today (Callahan, 1964; Cremin, 1964; Katz, 1968, 1971; Tyack, 1974).

The Common School of the 1800s had been designed to provide a "common" curriculum through eight grades for a predominantly rural society and work force. This emphasis upon the three R's, a patriotic version of history, and strong moral values and character was thought to be appropriate for both those destined for the farm or workplace (by far the majority) and those who would proceed to secondary school (a much smaller group headed for professional and managerial positions). But changes in the economy, particularly during the period from 1885-1920, forced the schools to accommodate to evolving labor needs.

Industrial development was the major influence on the economy. An influx of workers--youth from the country and immigrants from Europe--filled the cities. Factory owners requiring huge sources of capital increasingly turned to corporate ownership, creating a more impersonal, uniform, and uncaring work environment. The need for conforming workers, cycles of high unemployment, and social reformers' concerns about child labor were among the factors that led to raising the compulsory attendance age. Suddenly, cities were inundated by huge numbers of students who had never previously attended secondary schools.

The immediate concern was bringing order to a system that was unprepared for and overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Most of the students came from homes with little or no formal educational background, and many had little exposure to the American way of life. Since the vast majority of these students were destined for semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in the burgeoning industrial system, the traditional college preparatory curriculum was deemed inappropriate. What was important were habits of orderliness--punctuality, following directions, passive acceptance of rules, and general exposure to correct values and moral behavior. These traits of character were to be taught in a vocationally-oriented, training-based curriculum which would prepare students for the factory jobs that awaited them. Not coincidentally, businesses also supported this approach as a means to cut training costs for their workers.

These changes resulted in a comprehensive secondary school that separated students according to their likely destinies. The college prep track became the province of those future elites who were to go to college, the vocational track functioned to prepare factory workers, and a general track developed as a watered down curriculum for the many who were not bound for college but were shut out of or disinclined for the more explicitly hands-on vocational training. Tracks provided the order that was needed in the growing urban schools, and served to stratify students according to both their probable futures and their family background. In short, the schools served to select and sort students consistent with the existing social class hierarchy (Labaree, 1987).

What is Meritocracy?

When questions were raised about the fairness of such an obviously class biased system in terms of track placement, our notion of equal opportunity gradually changed. America, the land of opportunity, became America, the land of equal educational opportunity (do well in school and earn your own place in the meritocracy). The actual sorting mechanisms were the new IQ (intelligence quotient) and standardized, norm-referenced tests. The scientific status of IQ legitimated the tracking system that had already evolved. That IQ testing correlated so highly with family background caused little concern, merely reinforcing both commonplace and racist notions of intelligence (Blum, 1978; Gould, 1981; Hofstadter, 1944; Karier, 1973; Marks, 1980, 1982; Moore, 1981).

While this model of structurally differentiated schooling has never provided much in the way of quality education for the individuals in the vocational and general tracks, it has proven to be highly successful as an institutional arrangement. This seemingly contradictory statement requires that we distinguish between effects on the individual, the institution's staying power, and its function in meeting society's needs.

Three points can be made here. First, the lack of quality education for the individual was explained away by beliefs in the inevitability of the normal curve. Some children just did not have the capacity to learn. Second, schools have simply not been considered a failure for the greater part of this century. Measured by success in acquiring resources, public confidence, and centrality to the American Dream, probably no other institution can match the public schools. Even during times of crisis and reform, the inevitable result has been increased funding to do more of what the schools were already doing. It is only over the last couple of decades that public confidence in the schools has deteriorated significantly. Third, schools have done extremely well in what they were designed to do: sort and select students for their placement in the occupational and social class hierarchy.

Is There Merit to the Bell Curve?

Americans have long been regarded as a pragmatic people. On the other hand, intellectual attitudes have never been highly valued (cf. Hofstadter's, 1962, classic, Anti-intellectualism in American life). Thus the poor quality education received by some individuals is more than offset by other factors. First, not everyone suffered equally from a poor education. Those in the college prep tracks fared relatively well. And those on the bottom of the curve were heavily over represented by certain groups of whom little was expected anyway: recent ethnic and limited or non-English speaking immigrants, blacks, and the poor. What was more important was industry's voracious appetite for strong backs willing to perform the repetitive, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Poor quality schooling was not a barrier to these jobs, and perhaps was even beneficial as it lowered aspirations for higher level jobs that required more and better education. Those who worked in these low level, manual jobs had never had much opportunity to develop intellectual interests, were making a living, and were more likely to be satisfied with their status than if they had more and higher quality education.

In effect, the sorting and tracking in high schools helped to maintain stratification in the occupational and social class hierarchy. The normal curve of individuals spread across high, average, and low levels of education and knowledge matched exceedingly well the distribution of labor needs in the industrial era: professional/managerial, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled positions. And despite American claims of a classless society, people have always segregated themselves by social class and race, as evidenced by residence, schools attended, leisure activities, educational levels, and occupations. Industrial model schools have been a key institution in maintaining and legitimating the existing social class system. A more pragmatic solution to the diversity of students facing the urban schools at the turn of the century would be hard to imagine.

Is There Room for Change?

The ferment of the 60s, the social disruption of the 70s, and the reforms of the 80s all reflected, among other things, a growing dissatisfaction with our schools. No matter how much we "reform" and refocus priorities, the schools don't seem to be able to cope or keep pace with the problems in the wider society.

Some critics have suggested that the endemic problems with discipline and vandalism, drugs, drop-outs, low test scores and functional illiteracy are due to demographic changes that are beyond the control of the schools (e.g., increasing numbers of students from poor, minority, single parent, or non-English language categories). Others, from a more conservative perspective, have blamed the problems on the decline of basic values in both our schools and the wider society. According to this view, a "back to basics" approach to curriculum, discipline, religious values, and moral education, with stress on personal responsibility for students and the removal of troublemakers who refuse to conform, is the appropriate cure for our schools' ills.

But the current dissatisfaction with our schools runs much deeper than these two prevalent positions. The first position implies that there is nothing that can be done, simply giving up on those students who are most difficult to work with. The second view implies a "golden age" of schooling prior to the intrusions of the Supreme Court and the liberal reforms of the sixties and seventies. But that era never existed, if success was defined as quality education for all students, and the "cure" would typically remove rather than educate well the disadvantaged and culturally different students who have always had the most difficulty adjusting to the middle class norms of the school. It is precisely these non-mainstream students who are most in need of a quality education if they are to have a real chance for success in the wider society. In effect, this approach would stiffen requirements for everyone and force out those who don't measure up.

In contrast, we believe that a shift in society of much more fundamental proportions is occurring concurrently with significant demographic change. There is an increase in the type of students with whom our schools have always had difficulty. But the issue is not simply the changing proportion of these students.

The economy is changing in addition to the demographic changes. The number of jobs available to students with low quality education is decreasing. As the industrial economy has given way to the electronic, computer-information economy, unskilled and semi-skilled factory jobs are being exported, automated, and replaced with jobs that are service-oriented. Workers will require better people skills, more flexible judgment, the ability to solve problems, the capacity to adapt to change, and an orientation toward continuous learning and updating of personal skills and knowledge. In short, jobs increasingly require the liberal education that has been the province of the college prep track. The certificates of completion of schooling--signifying acceptable attendance, completion of undemanding classes, and a general willingness to conform to requirements--are no longer adequate for the economy of the late twentieth century.

In effect, the schooling of the masses in the general and vocational tracks has become dysfunctional. There simply is no longer a good fit between the products of mass schooling and the job market. Put another way, our schools continue to produce a normal curve of high, average, and low quality educated individuals. But the nation no longer has sufficient unskilled positions for those with a poor education. Meanwhile, the economy is experiencing a shortage of individuals with the professional, technical and managerial qualifications required for an internationally competitive market.

The conservative, back to basics perspective is also inadequate. While the stiffening of curricular requirements, i.e., the general rise in expectations, is an important element in the reform of our schools, the all too typical response of "measure up or get out" will do little to change the proportion of students who are being educated well. Any workable solution to our educational problems must be inclusive rather than exclusive. It is simply no longer acceptable, either from the perspective of institutional performance or the educational level of the individual, to provide liberal education for the few and batch process schooling for the masses. In other words, viable school reform must have a strong equity component in addition to the current focus on excellence.

Those involved in school improvement frequently hear from staff that "Kids are different today. Teaching is not what it used to be." These comments seem to reflect frustration and perhaps a wish for the return of the good old days. The face of America's classrooms is changing, and if demographic predictions are accurate, the public schools will be dealing with students whose characteristics are far different from those that a majority of teachers have been trained to teach.

In conceptualizing school improvement initiatives, analyses of the changing demographic data offer compelling arguments for altering the present concept of schooling and the way we operate schools. Harold L. Hodgkinson in Facing our Future, Demographics and Statistics to Manage Today's Schools for Tomorrow's Children (1985) states. . . "we need to begin seeing the educational system from the perspective of the people who move through it. This is because changes in the composition of the group moving through the educational system will change the system ."

Hodgkinson's studies of population data include fertility rates, age, distribution, family characteristics and socio-economic status. Each type of data provides valuable insights into the demands on schools of the future.

What are the Demographic Imperatives?

Can We Support an Elder Nation?

Not only is there a change in the racial and ethnic makeup of our nation. A significant change is also occurring in the age distribution of the general population. According to Hodgkinson (1985), thirty-four thousand citizens are over 100 years of age; 7.2 million are over 85, and 24 million are over 65. In fact the most rapidly growing age group in America is people over 85. In 1983, for the first time there were more people over the age of 65 than there were teenagers. That condition remains a constant for as long as any of us live. Obviously, this has considerable impact for the support of public schools. Already seventy percent of the school's constituencies are older people without children at home. By the year 2020, most of the 30 and 40 year olds will be retired, their retirement income provided by the much smaller age groups that follow. For example, in 1956, 17 workers paid the social security benefits of each retiree. By 1992, only three (3) workers will provide the funds for each retiree.

At a time when the general population is aging and fewer taxpayers have children in school, more children will be coming to America's classrooms at risk and in need of greater resources. As reported in Future Scan (1985), a child under six today is six times more likely to be poor than a person over 65. This is because we have increased support for the elderly, while government spending for poor children has actually declined during the past decade. The result is an increase of more than two million children during one decade who are "at risk" from birth. Consider the following statistics reported in Future Scan from the National Center for Education Information:

- From 1980 to 1983, the population under 5 years old grew 3 times as fast as the overall population.
- One in five children in this nation now live below the poverty level. The percentage of poor children under the age of six is 23.3%.
- The number of female householders, no husband present, has doubled since 1970 and tripled since 1960. One-third of all female householders are poor.

- One in three female householders is black. Forty-seven percent of black women maintain families of their own children with no husband present. Seventy percent of these children are classified as poor.
- Only 27% of all householders in this nation have children living with them; only 49% of dual-parent families have children.
- In more than half of two-parent families, both parents work.

Are We Becoming a Polarized Nation?

David Martin describes birth rates by ethnic background in Wake Up: The American Dream is Fading, and Our Future is at Risk (1988),

> ...it appears as if we're talking about the fertility rates of minorities vs. whites. But that is true only because minorities and recent immigrants are disproportionately represented in our underclasses and whites disproportionately represented in our middle class. The real issue *is the decline in the American middle class and a corresponding increase in the size of our underclass....* The United States middle class has a fertility rate that is below replacement level while underclasses are reproducing or immigrating at population explosion levels. . . . at the same time, the concentration of wealth in the United States is accelerating, making the rich richer and the poor not only poorer but more numerous . . . Put them together and you have a polarization that is turning the United States into a potentially unstable mix of haves and have-nots.

The aim of educators involved in school improvement efforts and effective schools is to de-polarize our society. By achieving equity and quality in schools, we begin to narrow the gap.

What is the American Family Structure?

Major changes have also taken place in the ways that families are structured in America. The nuclear family structure depicted in television series of the late 1950s is a rarity. In 1955, 60% of the households included a working father, a housewife mother, and two or more school-age children. In 1980, that family structure decreased to 11% of homes and in 1985, it represented only 7%. The census also reveals that 59% of children born in 1983 will live with only one parent sometimes before they reach age 18. This now becomes the normal childhood experience.

How Successful has American Education Been for "At Risk" Students?

To understand fully the potential impact of the changing demographics on American society, it is helpful to examine the success that public schools have had thus far in educating poor, minority and handicapped youngsters. Joan Barntz-Snoden, Director of Education Policy Research and Services Division at Educational Testing Service (E.T.S), who reviewed the scores of black students on a variety of standardized tests, concluded that the rate of change in improving the education of minorities is not encouraging.

According to Hodgkinson (1985),

> Most evidence suggests one factor outweighs others in accounting for the white/minority achievement gap: economic status, not race. The economic effects of poverty and its social and psychological toll lessen the chance of academic success for many minority students. Add the decrepit facilities, scant resources, high teacher turnover, and low expectations found in many schools in poor neighborhoods, and you have a formula for continued lower performance.

What is the Economic Impact of an Undereducated Population?

The impact of our inability to teach "at risk" students is made more vivid when you examine trends in America's economic structure. As we shift from an industrial society to an information society, John Naisbitt reports in Reinventing The Corporation (1985) that:

> the primary resources will be information, knowledge and creativity. Virtually non-existent will be the demands for workers with few basic skills who perform monotonous tasks with little interaction or co-worker input into processes. The non-college-bound confront high hurdles in their search for rewarding careers. Lacking college degrees, they are increasingly locked out of most highly paid occupations. Fields such as transportation, communication, utilities, government, and agriculture once offered steady employment to millions of young adults, but that is no more.

The costs of failure to educate children can be counted in both human terms and in loss of human capital to society. "Compared with peers whose reading and mathematics test scores fall in the top half, young people whose scores fall in the bottom fifth are 8.8 times more likely to leave school without a diploma, 8.6 times more likely to have a child out of wedlock, 5 times more likely to have an income below the poverty line, and 2.2 times more likely to have been arrested during the previous year" (Phi Delta Kappan, 1988). This paints a pretty grim picture for the future of many of America's youth, *but it* *also robs the nation of resources that effect the quality of life for us all.* "Each year's dropouts cost America $240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetime. Every $1 spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.75 in the costs of remedial education, welfare and crime further down the road" (Future Scan, 1988). The drop-out rate means less money for things that add to the overall quality of life--better highways, museums, parks, schools and all those other things that reflect a great American society for all.

What is the Potential of Current Reform Initiatives to Deliver Quality and Equity Outcomes?

To successfully evaluate the potential of current reforms to impact the quality and equity of public schools, it is important to look at both the *motive* of the reform initiative and the *processes* used by the initiative to bring about that desired outcome. What is the desired outcome? How will the reform be implemented? These questions must be answered in light of what we can predict about the future clients of the public schools and the research on successful organizational change.

The previous sections describe the schools' clientele for the next several decades--increasingly poor and minority from diverse family structures with increasing handicaps and greater cultural diversity. These changes demand schools to be ***explicit in their intent to effectively teach all children.*** Yet many early reform initiatives pushed schools to do just the opposite. Most early reforms demanded schools to "raise standards." This took the form of increased graduation requirements, longer school days, new grading standards, extra-curricular eligibility standards, etc. As Martin (1988) comments,

> All the national commissions are telling the schools to pick winners, but we need the schools to create winners. This is precisely the wrong time, demographically, to push for schools as selecting and rejecting devices. Further, we need all the middle class members we can get--white, black, Hispanic and Asian. The school role in making this happen will be crucial. The conclusion is clear: in a time of decreasing white middle class fertility and increasing minority enrollments, we need to make sure that every child succeeds in school.

John I. Goodlad and Jeanie Oakes suggest in We must Offer Equal Access to Knowledge (1988) that:

> The effects that projected changes in technology and demographics will have on our nation's economic stability, national defense, and international leadership over the next few decades have brought considerable attention to schools, as have comparable crises through the century . . . at the heart of the issue is the rather sorry record of schools in promoting the achievement and participation of black, Hispanic and poor children, those sectors of the population that will increasingly populate schools in the future . . . The convergence of these two trends—decreasing economic competitiveness and increasing poor and minority population--has put a special spin on what is expected of schools in the future. The net effect is that the attainment of those students whom schools now educate well will become increasingly critical.

In evaluating any reform initiative, it's imperative to assess the probable impact on *all* students. Any reform initiative that does not have at its core an explicit goal of measuring success by the quality *and equity* of student achievement is inappropriate to the problems facing American public schools.

The second framework for evaluating proposed reform is its implementation methodology. Based upon what we know about teacher behaviors and organizational characteristics that contribute to student learning, we need to ask, "What is the likelihood that the methodology will result in increased learning?" John Chubb's early work, The Dilemma of Public School Improvement (1987), provides insight into the dilemma. The Chubb study evaluated reform initiatives that began at the state level and focused on raising standards:

> In the early 1980s, steadily rising concern about the quality of American schools finally crested in a towering wave of education reform. A series of prestigious reports, most notably A Nation at Risk, largely validated ...pressures to respond, and in dramatic fashion the states rapidly did.
>
> Remarkably, the enthusiasm for even more improvement effort remains high. 'Competitiveness'...keeps the focus on American schools, and raises the additional prospect of federal efforts to supplement the reforms of the states.
>
> ...there is reason to believe that the program will fall far short of its goal--and perhaps even prove counterproductive: the premises that support the various reforms that have been enacted or remain under active consideration may be fundamentally incorrect about the causes of poor school performance.

The motive for change in the Effective Schools Movement is individual school improvement. Most of the current reforms are regulatory in nature. They impose higher standards and establish monitoring, reporting, and accountability systems to try to ensure that they are met. No matter how the current reforms are implemented, however, the most compelling reason for pessimism about their effectiveness is their conception: they allow little scope for improving those qualities of school organization that, in our view, are crucial to school performance. Schools have not been granted more autonomy; they have had it taken away. Real improvement in public education therefore presents a dilemma.

The reforms that are most consistent with current arrangements for school governance and administration are unlikely to foster the organizational and professional climates most conducive to student achievement. But the kinds of reforms that might well bring about better school conditions are inconsistent with existing controls and therefore unlikely to be adopted or adequately carried out. ***What are these more promising reforms? In essence they are plans to cultivate in schools the various qualities of organizational effectiveness, from stronger leadership to more professional teaching, by increasing school autonomy.***

Similar conclusions were reached by William W.Wayson (1988).

> The outstanding schools we visited uniformly demonstrated energy and confidence. They revive one's faith in the power of public education. They demonstrate that what many believe to be impossible can be done. They violate many of the normal operating procedures we see in mediocre schools; and they belie the standard myths in the form of excuses that keep so many from performing well. In these schools both staff and students--and sometimes whole communities--are inspired to higher levels of personal commitment in the pursuit of common purposes.
>
> Although these schools often seem to result from fortuitous confluence of good people, adequate resources, and a positive learning environment, they really did not come about by accident. The elements that make these schools excellent can be replicated; they are not secrets waiting to be discovered. Ordinary teachers and administrators are capable of developing the types of excellent schools we saw during our study.
>
> The top-down, controlling, and exclusionary policies and practices that characterize some aspects of the Excellence Movement are not found in good schools. They have order, but the control is neither authoritarian nor hierarchical; it comes from a commitment to purposes that transcend personal convenience or individual

> aggrandizement. These schools are communities that care for everyone's welfare, that enlist everyone's participation, and that display deep commitment and abiding loyalty. In these schools, all participants are learners.

In conclusion, these studies indicate that to evaluate the potential effect of a reform strategy, we must ask ourselves: To what degree will those who must make the changes be involved in deciding what those changes should be? And will the reform initiative shape the collective norms, beliefs and attitudes of the principals and staff in a way that results in success for all students?

What Will the 1980s Reform Movement Mean for Our Schools?

What are the Effects of the Reform Movement?

The Nation at Risk report spurred the so-called "excellence movement," again attributing society's ills to inadequate public education. A key part of this "reform" initiative was a perceived pressure on states to increase graduation requirements. As could be anticipated, this "improvement" has increased the drop-out rate where it has been applied. The schematic below describes the effects increased graduation requirements might have in a high school setting:

Group	Description of Effect	Effect
Top Third	Increased graduation requirements have no effect; these students are not motivated by minimums	0
Middle Third	Top half of this group possibly stretched a bit by increased requirements	+
	Bottom half of this group probably discouraged by increased requirements	-
Bottom Third	Has a negative effect, if any, for motivating these students to stay in school past age 16	-

Associated also with the excellence movement are a number of state initiatives. Thirty-eight states now have reform legislation, approaches which tend to be viewed as top-down, outside-in, and mandate-driven by those responsible for implementing them.

Increased discussion of tuition tax credits and vouchers and the credibility given such issues reflects the sorting and selecting expectation at political levels. The "free enterprise" aspects of this discussion also demonstrate the influence of business and industry on the expected outcome of schooling.

Emerging teacher empowerment and school-site management initiatives have been co-opted in several instances by teacher union/association support for their implementation as ends in themselves instead of as means to increased teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. This represents an unfortunate goal displacement. The accepted "quality" indicators continue to be "aggregate" data analyses (measures of central tendency, i. e., averages) which mask and obscure inequities in the treatment of subsets of student populations, performance of minorities and stereotypical expectations including gender roles.

How are Current and Future Reforms Related to the Effective Schools Approach?

In her study of successfully adaptive corporations, The Change Masters (1983) Kanter indicates that corporations which are responsive to changing conditions usually create structures that are at once familiar enough to be connected with the ways business is commonly conducted but yet are new enough to signify departure from the established ways of doing business.

The creation of a "School Improvement Team" at each school site as part of the Effective Schools process represents that kind of structural change. Each school site now has a designated "team" (something old) representing colleagues whose primary function it is to drive the discourse around teaching and learning issues and school improvement (something new).

This representative team involves itself in participatory decision-making related to problem-solving, goal-setting, consensus-taking and change, and is empowered by a district focus on results (product) more than means (process). This "directed autonomy" ties empowerment to improved teaching and learning as measured by student outcomes, a kind of "trade" of autonomy for results.

The primary emphasis given to the "disaggregated" analysis of outcomes in the Effective Schools process provides the measures for equity not included in the more "aggregated" analyses typically associated with ascertaining quality, especially as typically used to measure so-called "excellence." In the Effective Schools approach, quality and equity are concomitant goals.

The Effective Schools process offers a correction for the over-emphasis on excellence and neglect of equity and the tendency of the empowerment movement to disconnect process/autonomy issues from student learning outcomes.

How does the Effective Schools Framework Differ from Other Reform Initiatives?

The Effective Schools framework focuses on the creation of a culture that results in high *achievement for virtually all students*. In describing this comprehensive framework, three distinctive attributes are clear. When taken as a set, they provide a rationale for why this approach holds promise, particularly for economically disadvantaged and minority students.

Are We Achieving Quality and Equity?

The first attribute of the model is that it focuses on both quality of education and equity of educational opportunity. For a school to be judged as already effective or improving, it must be able to demonstrate that both quality and equity are concurrently present in the school.

The rationale for assessing a school's effectiveness in these terms is found in the answer to this simple question: "What does this nation say it wants from its public schools?" Consistently, throughout this nation, across states, and within local school units, constituencies expect their children to experience a quality education. In addition, the public believes that all school children will have equal educational opportunity. If this is indeed the perceived educational mission of our public schools, then it would follow that a school wishing to claim that it is effective will be able to substantiate that result. Further, a school embarking on school improvement will incorporate quality and equity into its purpose and goals. While there may be room for disagreement on particular definitions of an effective school, excellent school, or improving school, there can be no compromise on the commitment to both quality and equity. The evidence that a school is basing its improvement on Effective Schools Research, is found in a definition of effectiveness that addresses both quality and equity.

What Can We Learn From the Research Base About School Improvement?

A second attribute of ESR-based programs of school improvement centers on its research-founded model. The various ESR programs across the country have taken their content direction largely from the effective schools/effective teaching research which has evolved over the last fifteen or so years. In addition, these programs adopt their process direction from three interdependent bodies of related research: effective staff development, effective organizational development in education, and effective planned change programs.

Researchers and practitioners are quick to report that there is much yet to be learned about and from these content and process strands. School improvement programs, when in progress themselves, produce valuable evidence. In spite of the unknowns, we do know that when it comes to school improvement, there are some things that work better than others. As more programs of school improvement get underway, and as some move further along, our knowledge base of what should be done and how it should get done will become even richer than it now is.

Can Improvement Be Data Driven?

A third attribute of the ESR-based programs of school improvement is that the model is data-driven. Local school instructional decision-making is very dependent upon measurable or observable evidence. Data-driven evidence is useful for planned change. It provides answers which transcend more subjective professional judgments. In addition, such a model in place offers flexibility to attend to what is important and necessary. A teacher and classroom whose effort and achievement demonstrate that they have mastered or exceeded the school's goals on an area of the school's essential curriculum, can go on to the next priority.

When individual teachers or an entire faculty are found to be effective in teaching all the students, such events should be celebrated. Students and teachers are encouraged to continue to do what they have been doing, because what they have been doing works! The data-driven model is attractive. It permits teachers and schools to be versatile and flexible, and instructionally focused. The three attributes--quality and equity, research-based, and data-driven--set Effective Schools programs apart from other approaches to school improvement.

What are the Major Premises of the Effective Schools Movement?

Much of the research on effective schools utilizes the methodology of case studies of effective school practice. That is, the researchers identify places of schooling where intended outcomes are obtained and then study those environments to determine the practices which appear to characterize how that school is different from other schools. To do so, researchers must have a clear conceptual and operational definition of what constitutes an effective practice in this specific effective school. They have developed a definition which rests on several premises (Edmonds & Frederickson, 1979).

Premise 1

The primary function of schooling is teaching and learning. Although disarmingly simple, the effective school will evidence this priority in spite of the prevalence of competing alternative functions assigned by contemporary society as the chief purposes of schooling. Many would say that schools serve a custodial care function or provide a sorting and selecting mechanism. The quality of life and the ultimate career choices of students, for example, are important. However, such provisions must not become the overarching functions of schools. The effective school will have a mission of teaching and learning, even though this mission is grounded in the assumption that the teaching and learning will occur in an atmosphere where there is safety, orderliness, and optimal opportunity to learn.

Schools have historically served as institutions that sort and select children for college, for special education, and for alternative curricular tasks. The recent calls for reform appear to encourage the sorting and selecting function. The probable impact of the pressure imposed on schools to increase graduation requirements will be felt by students at all points along the achievement spectrum, but most negatively by the lower achieving students. Although it is naive to say that teaching and learning can be the exclusive school focus, a school community can decide that these elements will be the primary focus.

Premise 2

How will the school community know that it is doing a better job of teaching and learning? The second premise of ESR-based programs of school improvement is that *the primary basis for assessing the increased effectiveness of the school is in terms of student outcomes.*

The assessment of student outcomes as the primary basis for judging the effectiveness of a school may seem obvious. In reality, the outcomes standard just described is a radical departure from past practice. This fact is borne out by the prevalence of accreditation practices which rely on "inputs" and "processes" for assessing schooling. ESR emphasizes assessment through outcomes.

In all likelihood the accountability movement which has pressed human service institutions into producing "effect," "impacts" and "outcomes" will not diminish. Facing the fact that accountability pressures may intensify, educators would be well-advised to address the challenge of developing and articulating the outcomes by which their students will be assessed. Deciding which outcomes of schooling are of greatest importance is a process which is extremely useful in planning a program for school improvement. It focuses collegial discussion on the outcomes considered most essential and the indicators that will be monitored to determine whether those outcomes are being achieved.

Educators will gain public confidence when observable or measurable outcomes are used to substantiate claims that a school is effective. Merely stating that "Our school is doing a good job" appears to have little impact on today's public. Placing the institutional emphasis on observable or measurable indicators of student outcomes will have a positive influence upon the staff. Organizational energies flow toward a common purpose, providing a powerful impetus for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Premise 3

In the studies of the effective schools, the researchers state a third premise which has been a source of concern to many school practitioners. The researchers propose that *the way in which a local school district chooses to monitor student outcomes is indicative of the educational outcomes that the district cares most about.*

Frequently educators argue that the outcomes they are assessing locally are not what they believe to be the important outcomes of schooling. In other cases, practitioners say that the outcomes that they have selected to assess locally are only part of a much larger group of outcomes of concern.

In response to these two statements, a question or two will provide clarification. First: Is it realistic to spend human time, talent and financial resources on any assessment effort which is off the target of the school's "real" concerns? Second: Is it not possible to find or develop assessment instruments which do match curricular outcomes of critical concern to educators?

It is a challenge to relinquish traditional or comfortably entrenched assessment practices, even when they appear not to be measuring the outcomes of created concern. The most important outcomes of schooling are not always easily assessed. Nevertheless, the effort is essential. For educators to know that they have taught effectively and to ascertain that the students are learning with efficacy, they must be able to describe the resulting knowledge, skills, and behaviors which indicate student mastery.

Premise 4

An effective school is one which demonstrates both quality and equity in its program outcomes.

Research is demonstrating that it is possible for all students to demonstrate school success, especially when success is defined as mastery of the essential curriculum.

Americans continue to expect their public schools to provide an opportunity for every student to obtain a quality education, and to ensure that each student is offered equal educational opportunity. Therefore, for a school to say that it is effective for students, it must show evidence of the concurrent presence of quality and equity. How will schools choose to promote both equity and quality instruction for their students? There are several approaches.

For most school improvement efforts based upon ESR, the issue of quality is directly associated with the *level of achievement* which the students exhibit on local outcome measures. The distribution of achievement as it applies to student outcomes is based upon those same local measures.

Those outcome standards are anticipated in effective schools: First, *the overall level of achievement to which the students rise on the outcome measures must be sufficiently high to signify acceptable mastery of the essential curriculum.* Second, *the distribution of* *achievement must not vary significantly across the major subsets of the student population.* (That is, middle and upper socioeconomic students compared to lower SES students.) Some will do better than others certainly. Setting this standard does indicate, however, that the proportion of students from any one subset demonstrating mastery on the outcome measures should not constitute a significantly higher or lower level than any other subset of the entire student population. Acceptance of this premise and the supporting rationale permits local policy makers to incorporate a suitable method of planning for and monitoring their customized and desired goals and outcomes.

Premise 5

The final premise identified with local ESR school improvement practice rests upon the belief that *quality and equity are achieved and maintained only when the school improvement effort has been designed to accrue benefits for "all" students.*

Local school authorities may evaluate their intentions in this regard by asking: "What indicators will we monitor to determine if our school is improving?" and, "How will we analyze and report those indicators to ensure that the improvement effort is reaching and benefitting all students?"

Collectively, these five premises provide a useful framework for defining an effective school both operationally and conceptually. Using this formulation, a local school leader may confidently proceed with an assessment of school effectiveness, based upon ESR definitions.

What is the Moral Imperative for School Reform?

As Andrews and Soder (1985) pointed out:

> One of the salient facts of the American national experience is our belief in the efficiency of public education. Central to the American passion for education are two interrelated goals: academic excellence and social equity . . . The obligation to ensure equality of treatment and outcomes is both moral and expedient. The obligation is moral because . . it is simply not right to deny equal treatment and thus deny equal outcomes on the basis of any organismic or social variable as long as there is required equality...

As we read the demographic and economic forecasts for America's future and ponder the difficult circumstances in which many of our children find themselves, it's easy to be pessimistic about the ability of public schools to respond. George McKenna, Superintendent, Inglewood Unified School District, California and subject of the CBS Movie of the Week, "The George McKenna Story," puts this pessimism into proper perspective. McKenna speaks about school personnel who see themselves as *victims* of society's ills, unable to do a good job until the children come prepared to succeed. "Schools shape the values of society," says McKenna. He claims that educators are the most powerful people on earth because of both the ability and legal framework to shape children. He builds his case by comparing schools to other major social institutions--the media, government, the church, and family--all of which are powerful and are based on *voluntary* participation. "The American public school is the only social institution that *requires* participation, participation which begins in the most vulnerable time of an individual's life--childhood."

McKenna's claim that schools have the ability to impact the quality of educational outcomes--despite a child's background characteristics--is the heart of the Effective Schools framework. It takes away excuses, pessimism and fear and replaces it with some research-based guideposts for success. That research base is derived from numerous schools across the nation that have developed a culture possessing characteristics known as the correlates of effective schools:

- Clear and Focused Mission, dedicated to "teaching for learning for all"
- High Expectations for Student Success
- Positive School Learning Climate
- Strong Instructional Leadership
- Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task
- Effective School-Community Relationships
- Frequent Monitoring of Pupil Performance

These characteristics correlate positively with high pupil performance, whether the students come from middle class or low socioeconomic backgrounds.

This research provides the basis for the moral argument for school reform since the ability to respond to the critical needs of students becomes not a question of "can" but a question of "will." This country is founded on the premise of equal opportunity for all. Yet we know when we examine the *outcomes* of public schools, that there is clear differentiation between those students of low socioeconomic environment and those that are most affluent. Ethically we must ask ourselves, "Does poor pupil performance derive from socioeconomic background or from the school's response to that background?"

If many schools across the nation are effectively teaching all children, then the answer must be the latter. As the late Ron Edmonds (1979) said,

> How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than *one*, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. Second, whether or not we will ever effectively teach the children of the poor is probably far more a matter of politics than of social science and that is as it should be.

Summary

In the next several decades, increasingly large numbers of poor and minority students will be coming to America's classrooms. Yet examination of current results shows that these are the very students that schools have done the least well in educating. When school systems begin the process of choosing a school reform framework, it is critical that focus on both quality and equity be explicit in the model. Furthermore, the framework must pay attention to overall cultural change within the organization, rather than a quick fix "project" approach to change. The Effective Schools framework meets both these criteria and provides a long term comprehensive research-based process consistent with current demographic and economic changes in American society.

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NARRATIVE 2

EXAMINING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

INSIDE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

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Narrative 2

Inside Effective Schools

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Participants will describe the research-based school characteristics and processes that correlate with quality and equity of student outcomes.

Objectives:

(1) To relate the work of Coleman, Jencks, Edmonds, Brookover and others to the origins of the Effective Schools Research.

(2) To describe the major school effectiveness research studies and their common findings.

(3) To describe the research base for each correlate and the implication of this research to district, school and classroom practices.

(4) To describe the relationship of related research, such as teacher effects, to school effectiveness research and practice.

(5) To describe the major criticisms of Effective Schools Research and articulate a response to these criticisms.

Introduction

This reading, "Inside Effective Schools," begins with a brief review of the early work on Effective Schools and the ensuing research.

While the characteristics of Effective Schools Research do not exhaust potential definitions of an effective schooling, research and studies continually characterize an effective school as one which possesses a limited number of "correlates" that are closely related to student achievement.

This narrative asks the reader to consider the background and research of the Effective Schools movement with regard to effective classroom practices, district policies and school improvement planning.

What Is the Research Base on Effective Schools?

The origins of the Effective Schools movement go back to July 3, 1966, with the publication of the Equal Education Opportunities Study (EEOS) popularly known as the Coleman Report. Mandated by Congress in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and chaired by Professor James S. Coleman, the EEOS report concluded that school resources have little impact on student achievement independent of the student's background and socioeconomic status:

> Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context...this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. For equality of educational opportunity must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's immediate social environment, and that strong independent effect is not present in American schools (p. 325).

Furthermore, this report addressed to President Lyndon Johnson and the Congress stated this depressing conclusion:

> But this fact alone is important: differences in school facilities and curriculum, which are the major variables by which attempts are made to improve schools, are so little related to differences in achievement levels of students that, with few exceptions, their effects fail to appear even in a study of this magnitude...Taking all results together, one implication stands out above all: That schools bring little

> influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context (p. 325).

Needless to say, these widely disseminated conclusions had a demoralizing effect on American public education. The conclusion that schools don't make a difference tended to lower expectations and decrease confidence in the importance of public education. Although the object of the study was to assess the distribution of educational resources by race and, based on these data, assess equality of educational opportunity in public schools, the results actually could have proven detrimental to advancing educational equity for poor and minority students.

However, Coleman and his colleagues clarified this as a public policy issue by bringing into sharp contrast the question of whether student achievement derives more from the homes from which children have come or the schools to which they are sent. Fortunately this prompted several researchers to formulate research strategies that would, if successful, begin to challenge the Coleman hypothesis and set direction for making schools responsive to all students.

Phase I - The Search

The strategy that emerged was for researchers to go into the world of public schools and find individual schools that represented clear exceptions to Coleman's conclusion that schools don't make a difference. Three important "first generation" studies emerged: (1) Inner City Children Can Be Taught to Read: Four Successful Schools (Weber, 1971); (2) Elementary School Climate and School Achievement (Brookover &Schneider, 1975); and (3) Search for Effective Schools: The Identification and Analysis of City Schools that Are Instructionally Effective for Poor Children (Edmonds & Frederickson, 1979). This first phase of the Effective Schools movement proved the generalization of Coleman and others to be wrong. The case study literature demonstrated that in numerous settings, there are schools that are able to attain remarkably high levels of pupil mastery despite the fact that the schools served large proportions of economically poor and disadvantaged students, minority and non-minority.

Phase II - The Description

Once schools were identified as "effective" exceptions to Coleman's findings, the second period of the movement began. Researchers turned their attention to the internal operations of such schools. (For further scholarly discussion, see Miller, 1985.)

Effective schools, based on measured outcomes, were identified and paired with similar schools in all respects except for the more favorable student outcome profile. Field researchers were sent into these "pairs of schools" to conduct interviews, observations, and surveys designed to develop as rich a description of the life of these schools as possible. The data were then analyzed with the following question in mind: "What are the distinctive characteristics of the effective schools that seem to set them apart from their less effective counterparts?"

What emerged from the field research were descriptions of certain characteristics that seemed to describe how these schools were able to maintain their level of effectiveness. Listed below are the five factors that Edmonds described in his earliest research (Edmonds, 1978; Lezotte, Edmonds & Ratner, 1975; Edmonds & Fredrickson, 1979):

1. The principal's leadership and attention to the quality of instruction;
2. A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus;
3. An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning;
4. Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery; and
5. The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.

(Note: Edmonds used the word "Correlate.") Since that original listing, many other studies have cross-validated these findings. Some of the more recent studies have added additional characteristics (Glen, 1981; Levine &Stark, 1987; Stringfield &Teddlie, 1987) and others have sought to make the original Edmonds list more explicit and more operational (Gauthier, 1982; Shoemaker,1982; Villanova, 1984). New studies have also looked closely at elementary schools (Bamburg & Andrews, 1987) as did Edmonds in his original research. In addition, researchers have now documented the existence of the correlates in settings other than those that were characterized as serving primarily economically poor and minority student populations. Finally, the research has been expanded to include studies from other cross-cultural settings, with England represented most frequently (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Orston, 1979).

Levine and Lezotte (1990) recently synthesized the original research and newer studies in Unusually Effective Schools. They acknowledged that most of the studies which provide useful information on such schools are case studies or mini-descriptions of elementary schools which either enroll a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students who demonstrate relatively high achievement in reading and/or mathematics, or enroll both high and low-status students and apparently have registered substantial achievement gains for both groups of students. Although some research has sought to determine whether unusually effective middle-class schools and secondary schools may differ from their elementary counterparts enrolling a predominantly or significantly disadvantaged population (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), little is known concerning how correlates of effectiveness may appear in these settings.

Ongoing research on school effectiveness is complicated by factors common to research in the social sciences such as: (1) The identified effective and ineffective schools may not differ greatly from other schools comparable in socioeconomic composition. (2) Different schools frequently are identified from one year to another. (3) Selection of instruments and statistical techniques can substantially affect results. (4) Socioeconomic status and other relevant student background variables are very difficult to control. (5) A considerable proportion of studies define effectiveness in terms of student performance on mechanical skills and subskills in the lower elementary grades.

Despite the difficulties involved in analyzing and interpreting available research, the literature continues to justify the conclusion that unusually effective schools generally can be characterized as exemplifying a relatively limited number of "correlates" that are associated with and seemingly help account for their students' superior achievement.

Educators in several other countries have also conducted studies on effective schools. A four-year study by the Inner London Education Authority (Mortimore & Sammons, 1987) identified 12 factors that distinguish effective elementary schools from less effective ones.

Many of the specific behaviors and strategies employed by principals and teachers of the effective schools closely parallel and reinforce the importance of the characteristics discussed below (e.g. purposeful leadership, involvement in decision-making, clear focus, positive climate and parental involvement).

Further research on effective schools is being pursued by the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development housed at the University of Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, and by other researchers around the country. Case studies on predominantly middle class schools which have become effective for all children are being studied, especially schools in larger, more diverse districts. As new findings are disseminated, we will know more about the developmental sequence and characteristics of organizational structures which are essential to these schools becoming effective.

What Are the Characteristics of an Effective School?

To understand and appreciate the capacity of the school staff to create conditions for student success, it is helpful to look more closely at the characteristics that researchers found in highly effective schools. These organizational factors are also referred to as alterable elements (i.e., capable of being altered by the school staff), correlates (i.e., associated with high student achievement and school characteristics) and "school effects."

1. Safe and orderly environment

   In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful businesslike atmosphere which is free from threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

2. Climate of high expectations for success

   In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which staff believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills and that they have the capability to help all students attain mastery.

3. Instructional leadership

   In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

4. Clear and focused mission

   In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. Staff accept responsibility for students' learning the school's essential curricular goals.

5. Opportunity to learn and student time on task

   In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of this time, students are engaged in whole class or large group, planned, teacher directed learning activities.

6. Frequent monitoring of student progress

   In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

7. Positive home/school relations

   Parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission.

It is important to note that the correlates constitute a set of characteristics identifying considerations most of which must be addressed if a school is to be unusually effective in producing student achievement. For example, faculty may well have high expectations for students and may establish a productive climate, but achievement is not likely to be high in the absence of effective arrangements for delivering instruction. Similarly, focus on student acquisition of central learning skills will have little impact unless faculty insist on high expectations and requirements. (The term "central learning skills" refers to a manageable number of key cognitive skills, rather than a host of mechanical skills frequently taught through page-by-page coverage of a text.)

There are many ways in which a faculty may choose to work on improving a combination of characteristics such as "productive climate" or "effective instructional arrangements and implementation." The overall challenge is to devise and implement a range of coherent policies and practices that deal effectively with the larger issues implicit in the delineation of correlates, and the organizational dynamics which ensue as they work together.

For example, unusually effective schools may make major improvements in climate through such means as development and implementation of rigorous discipline and homework policies (McCormack-Larkin & Kritek, 1982), establishment of a "Mental Health Team" to bolster services for disruptive or maladjusted students (Comer, 1980, 1988), and/or a combination of these and many other possibilities. Similarly, unusually effective student grouping arrangements as portrayed in case studies describing successful schools and in other research have involved such alternatives as the following:

- "parallel classes" of the lowest readers who receive special help in small classes (Levine & Stark, 1981; Glickman & Pajak, 1986);
- "parallel scheduling" of reading so as to offer instruction in small groups for students grouped by previous achievement (Canady, 1989);
- provision of daily one-on-one tutoring provided by highly-trained, skilled teachers for low achievers in the first grade (Pinnell, 1988);
- placement of low readers in school-within-a-school units taught by teachers specially selected, qualified, and trained to help them improve in comprehension skills (Gooden, Lane, & Levine, 1989; Levine & Sherk, 1990);
- extensive use of certified teachers to help provide tutoring in reading and small-group instruction in the primary grades (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, & Livermon, 1989);
- a variety of developmental and remedial learning opportunities during or outside the regular school day (Sizemore, Brossard & Harrigan, 1983; Murphy & Waynant, 1989);
- reduction of primary-grades class size to 22 or less at inner city schools (Stevens, 1988; Groom, 1989; Murphy & Waynant, 1989); and
- utilization of paraprofessionals to provide additional help for low achievers (Venezky & Winfield, 1979; Glenn, 1981).

For these changes to be successfully implemented, they must be accompanied by provision of comprehensive support for teachers and students, emphasis on active/enriched learning, attention to students' personal development, and effective organization and delivery of instruction focused on central learning skills.

What are the major conclusions that emerged from this expanding array of descriptive studies of effective schools? First, the more effective schools do share a describable list of institutional and organizational characteristics that seem to coexist with school effectiveness when it is defined by measured student mastery of the intended curriculum. Second, these core factors seem to be robust in that they have endured across the various studies. Third, the effective school can and generally does stand alone, even among its counterparts in the same local school district. The major implication is that the institutional and organizational characteristics that coexist with effectiveness are attainable by the single school and one school at a time. This suggests that effective schooling is within the grasp of the teachers and administrators of the single school.

With the publication of these descriptions of the effective school, practitioners and community members began to take a more active interest. It became clear that more schools could organize themselves to achieve these extraordinary results. The important question then became: How could the knowledge about these effective schools become the basis for purposeful transformation, through planned change programs, for even more schools?

How Have the Findings on Effective Schools Been Replicated?

As school practitioners began to discover that effective schools could be characterized by such a practical list of variables, a significant transition occurred toward the application of the research to school improvement. Across the country, a number of well known school improvement programs were planned and implemented. In New York City, then Assistant Chancellor Edmonds led the way and provided the beginnings of a process model for others. Subsequently, a number of noteworthy school improvement programs were undertaken in Connecticut, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri and Mississippi. Betty Mace-Matluck (1987) describes this in The Effective Schools Movement: It's History and Context:

> The early work of the Effective Schools movement was so enthusiastically received that few, if any, state departments of education have not become involved in school improvement efforts based on the Effective Schools Research, and the term "effective schools literature" has become current in literally thousands of schools and school districts across the nation. This is undoubtedly one of the most frequent topics in educational journals, and it has been a very popular topic on conference agendas as well.

During this period of using the research as a basis for improving schools, a definition of an effective school emerged as did a process for working with schools to become more effective. Mace-Matluck summarized the definition this way: "While the definition details differ from one researcher (or study) to another, there seems to be a commonality among the key ingredients of an effective school: a student achievement focus, an emphasis on all students, and a goal of mastery of basic skills" (p. 10). After considering various available alternatives, Mace-Matluck offered a composite of definitions commonly found:

> An effective school is one in which the conditions are such that student achievement data show that all students evidence an acceptable minimum mastery of those essential basic skills that are prerequisite to success at the next level of schooling" (p. 11).

Also during this period, several syntheses and critical reviews of the literature were completed. From this body of work, somewhat different lists of effective schools' characteristics appeared. Regardless of terminology, all agreed that each of the factors is related to each of the others, that they are interactive, and they are all present in an effective school. While sharing many common elements, the lists varied both in numbers and in the specifics of the descriptions. However, the most commonly used set of correlates emerged from the work of Lezotte (1975), Brookover (1975), Gauthier (1982), Shoemaker (1982), and Villanova (1984). Their descriptions added two new characteristics to Edmonds' original five: home-school relations and time on task/opportunity to learn.

Edmonds, Lezotte, Brookover and others contributed to the process further as they began addressing the problems of implementation in schools. The following excerpt is taken from "School Improvement Based on Effective Schools Research" (Lezotte, 1989):

> When we began to address the problems of implementation, we believed that if we were going to ask schools to change their practices based on the research findings, research should be used as a guide to the implementation processes as well. We reviewed three interrelated bodies of research for the purpose of identifying the lessons to be learned. The three areas of research we reviewed were grounded in our notion of school change. First, since school change could be regarded as "people change," we examined the research on effective staff development. Second, since school change could be considered organizational change, we looked at the literature on effective organizational development, especially as applied to the school. Third, whether school change is to be thought of as people change or systems change, we were clearly approaching it as planned change. Thus we reviewed the literature on planned change. Fortunately, the lessons to be learned from the various research data added up to the same general conclusions. Among the guiding principles, we concluded the following about creating more effective schools:
>
> - Preserve the single school as the strategic unit of planned change.
> - Principals, though essential as leaders of change, can not do it alone and thus, teachers and others must be an integral part of the school improvement process.

- School improvement, like any change, is best approached as a process, not an event. Such a process approach is more likely to create a permanent change in the operating culture of the school that will accommodate this new function called continuous school improvement.
- The research would be useful in facilitating the change process but it would have to include suggestions of practices, policies and procedures that could be implemented as a part of the process.
- Finally, like the original effective schools, these improving schools must feel as if they have a choice in the matter and, equally as important, they must feel as though they have control over the processes of change.

With these guiding principles we set out to create school plans that would take the school from its current level of functioning toward the vision of effectiveness as represented in the research. We can say that Effective Schools Research worked for some and not others. Fortunately, it has worked for enough schools so that we have a large and growing number that can proudly show results that prove that more of their students are learning. They feel empowered to commit their professional energies to the proposition that even more students can and will learn in their school in the future.

Two major conclusions can be drawn from the lessons learned from this period of the Effective Schools movement. First, while researchers do not have all of the answers, the literature on successful change clearly establishes that some strategies of planned change do, indeed, work better than others. Second, the process of school improvement based on the Effective Schools Research takes time, involvement, and commitment. Whenever one tries to "short cut" any of these essential prerequisites, the results are soon diminished (Lezotte, 1989).

What Is the School District Role in Replication?

The early efforts to implement programs of school improvement based on the Effective Schools Research clearly supported the individual school as the strategic unit for change. Effective Schools Research emphasizes that if school improvement is going to occur, it will take place one school at a time.

However, experience with the school by school model has taught a number of valuable lessons which, taken together, serve to encourage a district-wide application of the school by school concept. Two forces combine to reinforce this current emphasis. First, political necessity associated with the generalized educational reform movement of the 1980s meant that local school districts needed a comprehensive program of school improvement if they were going to satisfy their various constituencies. After all, it did not seem to serve the interests of the local board and superintendents if, when asked about their commitment to school improvement, they could only respond by saying that they were doing what they were told by state mandates, although some of their individual schools were engaged in an Effective Schools process at the building level. From this frame of reference, the Effective Schools model represented a viable, manageable, and therefore, attractive district response to the call locally for a program of school improvement.

The second force evolved because of these larger political considerations. Individuals working with the Effective Schools model at the school level realized that individual schools exist as a part of the larger legal, political, and organizational setting of the local school district. What became clear was that one could successfully effect school improvement at the individual school level and could ignore this layered context. It also became clear that this would be difficult to do. Furthermore, when an individual school's faculty set out on their own to plan and implement their program, they often found themselves being challenged by their colleagues, or at least being impeded by district-level policies, patterns, and practices.

These two forces were joined and a new, stronger formulation of the Effective Schools process resulted. This new formulation still places great emphasis on school-level change, but it now emphasizes the larger organizational context and its role in supporting and enhancing the individual school's efforts. It builds school efforts upon district policies and guidelines that support school change. The policies and procedures generally thought to be beyond the control of each individual school are addressed by a collaborative group of teachers, building and district administrators, and even community and parent representatives. This begins to model the collaborative process at the district level. Once the policies and guidelines have been written, they are presented to the local board of education. This act establishes school improvement as a matter of official policy and provides the guiding force for school improvement in the district and in each of its individual schools.

The current role of the district serves several valuable functions. It acknowledges that when it comes to sustained school improvement, there are no unimportant adults in the system. Additionally, it acknowledges the importance of the superintendent and the members of the board of education providing leadership and vision for school improvement. As a matter of fact, this phase of the Effective Schools process makes it clear that without sustained leadership from the superintendent, it is unlikely that the Effective Schools movement will become all that it could be. Also, this model recognizes the need to couple more tightly and ensure alignment between the school sites and the district office. Finally, it communicates to school level personnel that they are central to school effectiveness and that all other personnel should stand ready to do whatever they can to be of assistance.

Early efforts at implementing effective schools produced an expanded list of individual schools that benefit from these efforts. The increasing number of district-level programs also show encouraging signs that districts can move forward if their efforts reflect the appropriate degrees of coordination and institutional commitment. More time is needed to further refine the district-wide process. But as each preceding phase builds upon and adds to what has gone before, an added dimension and further reinforcement of the fundamental belief that all students can and will learn emerges.

What Are the Implications of Effective Schools Research and Practice for School Improvement Planning?

As the use of the Effective Schools research continued to grow, certain aspects of implementation emerged most often in successful efforts. These characteristics convey a "common sense" but research-based approach to improvement. Second, they provide a basis for making a decision as to whether or not the Effective Schools approach is consistent with personal beliefs and school district needs. Third, discussion of these characteristics serves as a kind of orientation of "what's involved" when using this process for school improvement.

A Planning Process

Unlike some improvement initiatives or strategies, the Effective Schools approach is not a project or program. These terms are inappropriate since they may convey a short term "episodic" approach to the improvement. "Effective Schools-based" school improvement is a long term on-going planning process, wherein goals are set, strategies are devised, a plan is written and accomplishments are evaluated.

School-Based

Although the Effective Schools approach recognizes that there is no one more important than individual classroom teachers, this approach focuses on improving the overall institutional or "school effect" on student achievement "school by school, one school at a time." Furthermore, this approach is built on the belief that those most likely to bring about lasting school-wide change are the principal, teachers and support staff working collaboratively toward common goals.

Research-Driven

Those using an Effective Schools approach have the security of knowing that the process is built on the significant body of school effects research. This research provides, through the identification of the correlates, a road map and a language for carrying on the discourse of school improvement. This research replicated the relationship of certain school wide characteristics with high student achievement in a variety of educational settings.

Outcomes-Focused

The entire focus of the process is to initiate a series of planned activities to ultimately improve the quality and equity of student outcomes, specifically academic achievement.

Improvement Designed by Staff

Using a "representative team approach," each school selects a school improvement team to organize and manage the on-going improvement process. This team is responsible for seeing that a mission is written and communicated, outcome evidence is established, data is analyzed, goals are set and an improvement plan is written and implemented.

To Create a New Culture

The result of the planning process should be the identification of a series of strategies that create the school wide norms, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of staff and students that are consistent with "teaching for learning for all."

To Serve all Children Well

If an Effective Schools program is successful, the school will, over time, increasingly do a better job in serving all children despite race, socioeconomic status or gender and this should be evidenced by disaggregated analyses of targeted student outcome measures.

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NARRATIVE 3

LEADING AND EMPOWERING FOR CHANGE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Leading and Empowering for Change

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Narrative 3

Leadership and Empowerment for Change

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Participants will understand the school and district leadership behaviors necessary to initiate and sustain school improvement processes based on effective schools research.

Objectives:

(1) To review the characteristics of effective leaders as identified by research from the private sector.

(2) To review instructional leadership characteristics that correlate with high student achievement.

(3) To examine the value of staff empowerment and decentralized decision-making in the improvement process.

(4) To describe the impact of the change process on people and structures within an organization.

Introduction

The importance of professional work to the functions of our society has been well documented. Donald Schon in The Reflective Practitioner (1983) reminds us that virtually all of society's business is conducted through specially trained professionals. These professionals have been trained to provide health care, run businesses, adjudicate our laws, run our cities, design and construct our buildings, and teach our children. As we group these professionals in our schools, hospitals, businesses and law firms, we are faced with providing leaders who can orchestrate their talents so that students learn, patients get well, goods are produced, or people receive due process. By grouping them together into organizations, we raise perplexing questions concerning the appropriate kind of leadership and whether or not this kind of leadership is universal for all kinds of organizations. Providing appropriate leadership of course is not a new idea; it is as old as civilization itself. The minds of Socrates, Aristotle and Lao Tzu wrestled with notions about leadership, its function, meaning, methods, and value.

At no other time in history, however, has there been a greater crisis of confidence in leadership than exists today. The loss of confidence has been felt for all forms of leadership--political, corporate, civic, religious, and educational. Loss of confidence in school leadership has resulted from a perception that quality is lacking in our schools. It is sometimes perceived that leadership ability is low among those who are practicing school administrators, and school leaders are more concerned about personal gain than serving the needs of children and society. To renew public confidence in school leaders will require the (a) recruitment, (b) selection, (c) retention, (d) evaluation, and (e) ongoing training of a corps of school principals who clearly understand the meaning of schooling in a democratic society, who possess leadership ability, and who perform their professional roles in such a manner that teachers will commit their considerable time and energy to create effective schools.

At the heart of such leadership are some fundamental notions about what leaders in schools are obliged to do in a compulsory system of schooling. Those of us who volunteer to become educational leaders assume enormous obligations under a compulsory schooling system in a democratic society. The most important obligation is to build a structure of relationships within schools to ensure that all children learn. To the extent that each child learns to his/her full and natural potential, the structure of relationships within schools has succeeded in promoting excellence. To the extent that initial differences between or among groups of children are eliminated over time, the structure of relationships within schools produces equity. The extent to which these two are achieved defines the effectiveness of a school. Thus effective schools are produced when principals and superintendents use their professional knowledge and skills to create conditions where each child can grow to his or her full potential.

Over the past few decades much has been written on the perception of parents, teachers, school administrators, the general community, and business leaders about their schools. Parents believe they are turning their children over to the state when they enroll their children in public schools. In doing so, a trust relationship is established. This trust is our obligation; as professional educators we will give their children equality of opportunity to succeed in our society.

It does not seem to make any difference whether the parent is rich or poor; Black, White, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian; male or female; single parent or dual parent; whether the parent walks or drives the child to school, puts the child on a school bus, or whether the parent is even home when the child leaves for school--there is still the prevailing belief that schools will give that child equality of opportunity to succeed in our society. Under such conditions, enormous ethical liabilities accrue to those who choose to become educational leaders.

As long as educational research suggested that we do not make a difference in the achievement of children, educators could go about doing whatever they chose without running askew of fulfilling these obligations. If the conditions in which children live are so pervasive that whatever educators provide does not make a difference in their success, then they can blame lack of performance on circumstance--children are poor, children come from ethnic minority backgrounds, etc. However, if what educators know suggests that what they do on a day-to-day basis as educational leaders has a profound effect upon children's opportunity to succeed in our society, then all the ethical, moral, and legal obligations accrue for educational leaders to create conditions in schools that reflect what we know.

John Goodlad in A Place Called School (1984) has suggested that teaching is a moral profession. A moral profession means that good things or the right things will happen as a result of our behavior. If teaching is a moral profession, then the role of administration is to orchestrate the activities of teachers in such a way that good things happen in schools.

The body of research on effective schools supports the conclusion that what principals and teachers do collectively on a day-to-day basis has a powerful influence over the behavior of individual teachers as they interact with children in their classrooms. The leadership role that principals play as they interact with teachers has a profound impact on both teacher behavior and student learning.

A comprehensive strategic view of leadership is critically needed--not just by leaders high in the district, but by leaders at every level and in every position. Certainly, as school leaders, we should be anxious to become involved in developing the leadership skills necessary to: (1) translate intention into reality; and (2) sustain it, so that vital and viable schools are created for the education of all children.

As noted earlier, defining effective leadership is not a modern problem. Biographers, historians, social scientists, and educational researchers have discussed the concept of leadership for decades. When considered in its general form, Warren Bennis notes that there are more than 350 definitions of leadership recorded in the literature.

These definitions range from leadership being defined as those who are able to involve everyone in a shared mission (Bennis & Nanus,1985) to inducing followers to act toward goals that represent the values of both the leader and the followers (Schmuck, 1985).

Various theories have been offered to explain what leaders do, how they behave, what attributes they possess, and how varying situations affect styles of leadership. How one defines leadership determines the extent to which it is a key element in producing effective organizations. What has been learned about leadership over the past few decades has allowed many to dispel some old myths and at the same time construct new realities about leadership. Before turning to specifics about the leader behavior of school principals, let's examine some myths that have been noted related to leadership in general.

What Myths and Realities about Leadership Are Prevalent?

Leadership too often is considered to be an innate ability, as though no amount of learning or interest in learning to be a leader could make any difference. Basically, this unsupported concept held that "leaders are born, not made." This is one of the basic myths refuted by Bennis and Nanus in Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge. They contend that "leadership seems to be the marshalling of skills possessed by a majority, but used by a minority" (p. 27).

Bennis and Nanus cite five key elements that negate much of management education and, at the same time, may discourage potential leaders from "taking charge" of their organizations. The following excerpts are myths of leadership that need to be replaced by realities in leadership.

> **Myth 1: Leadership is a rare skill.** While great leaders may be as rare as great runners, great actors or great painters, everyone has leadership potential. More important, people may be leaders in one organization and play quite ordinary roles in another.

Myth 2: Leaders are born, not made. The major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned. To do so leaders must unlearn some old behaviors and learn some new behaviors. For some of us it will not come easy but we can all change--if we want to.

Myth 3: Leaders are charismatic. Some are; some aren't. In fact, most leaders are not particularly charismatic, but they are bright, open and able to accept feedback. They are able to say "I blew it" and keep on with their work.

Myth 4: Leadership exists only at the top of an organization. The larger the organization, the greater the number of leadership roles that exist. Leadership is required at every level of an organization.

Myth 5: The leader controls, directs, prods, manipulates. This is perhaps the most damaging myth of all. Effective leaders lead by pulling rather than pushing; by inspiring, rather than ordering; by creating achievable, though challenging, expectations and rewarding progress toward them, rather than manipulating; by enabling people to use their own initiative, creativity, and experiences (Bennis & Nanus, 1988, p. 222-225).

What Are Some of the Demonstrated Characteristics of Effective Leaders?

Following a series of 90 interviews and a process that took two years, Bennis and Nanus were able to draw some general conclusions from the data about common characteristics of successful leaders. Most important, they were able to identify leadership strategies that can be learned, developed and sustained. The following excerpts are dominant characteristics of leadership that emerged and were true of every leader that was part of the Bennis and Nanus study:

1. **Clear Sense of Purpose.** Purpose is what separates the leader from the manager. Leaders are concerned with outcomes. Leaders know what needs to

be done and they are intense about moving in that direction to accomplish their goals.

2. **Persistence.** This characteristic was mentioned most often by leaders. This trait separates the leader from the dreamer. The leader is willing to spend whatever time or effort is necessary to achieve results. No leader interviewed had an effortless path to success. The leader must have faith in his or her ideas. Leaders accept sacrifice--it is part of the persistence and dedication necessary to fulfill their dreams.
3. **Self Knowledge.** Leaders tend to be perceptive about their own abilities. Leaders appear to have an integrated personality that will not separate their talent from their work. Effective leaders capitalize on their strengths and have an equally clear view of weaknesses, but never let those weaknesses interfere with their confidence. Because they recognize and accept their weaknesses, leaders are good at delegating and almost never feel they can do it all by themselves.
4. **Perpetual Learners.** The capacity to continue to feel a need and have the desire to develop their own skills separates leaders from followers. Leaders make the effort to be informed, to develop their skills.
5. **Love of their work.** Leaders see work as fun and are constantly renewed by it. They often say they are amazed to be making money at something that is so much fun. Because of their focus on purpose, they lose sense of time, forget about personal problems and cease to worry about reward. This is what separates the dedication of the leader from the workaholic who, on the other hand, is driven by pressure rather than the pleasure of their work.
6. **Ability to attract and energize people.** Leaders are able to draw and unite people around them into a unified effort. Followers see the energy and enthusiasm of the leader and want to join in. Managers manage people through a system of rewards and punishments. Leaders motivate through example.

Their followers identify with their ideals and behaviors and seek to emulate them.

7. **Maturity in human relationships.** Leaders have the ability to work with a variety of people in constructive, productive ways. Leaders possess humanistic values, which are expressed in their attitudes toward those around them. They accept people the way they are. They are centered in the present and not the past. Mistakes are forgotten as people are given several chances. They do not take people for granted. They treat people close to them with the same courteous attention that they would extend to a stranger. They trust people. They do not require constant approval from others. Leaders are willing to invest time in people. For the successful leader, people are more important than products. Those who fail at leadership are often unable to open themselves up to others. They find it dangerous or risky.
8. **Risk Takers.** Leaders are willing to explore and experiment with anything that will lead to the ultimate purpose or goal. They are willing to take chances with ideas, people and money. They focus on what they can gain rather than what they might lose. This risk-taking is possible because they have a strong sense of purpose. Short-term risks are seen as viable to reach long-term goals. They are not afraid of failure.
9. **Fail-safe.** Leaders do not believe there is such a thing as failure. Leaders interviewed did not use the word failure in any of the interviews. Failure was referred to as "a setback, false start, or glitch." Leaders are able to transform the most serious mistakes into learning experiences. Every event is seen as progress.
10. **Ultimately Followers.** Leaders are guided always by the human needs they seek to serve. They are so good as followers that they are propelled into

leadership positions. Thomas Jefferson was an example of a follower who was inspired by "citizenry for freedom" (Bennis & Nanus, 1988).

What Leadership Strategies Can Be Learned?

As a result of their extensive research reported in Leaders, Bennis and Nanus (1988) have developed a four-point strategy for leadership success--strategies that can be learned, developed and improved upon. They are:

- **Strategy I: Attention through Vision**
- **Strategy II: Meaning through Communication**
- **Strategy III: Trust through Positioning**
- **Strategy IV: Deployment of Self**

All four strategies work together to enable the leader to empower others as illustrated in following formula:

Vision + Communication + Positioning + Self-Management = Empowerment

Vision - "I see a desirable future state"

Communication - "I can convey that future state clearly and forcefully"

Positioning - "I can take the action to make the vision happen"

Self-Management - "I behave in ways that promote the best efforts of self and others."

Empowerment - All are inspired to work toward the dream. And the organization achieves the results we expect.

From these basic myths and realities of leadership, it is apparent that leadership skills can be learned and nurtured. The leaders in Bennis and Nanus' study all had the ability to transfer intention into reality and to sustain it. They were able to accomplish this by utilizing the four-step formula of visioning, communication, positioning and self management which resulted in the empowerment of people and organizational success.

These concepts seem applicable to educational settings (Bennis & Nanus, 1988, p. 26-79).

What Do Authors From the Private Sector Tell Us About Leadership?

In their book the Leadership Challenge, Kouzes and Posner (1987) also outline practices that enable leaders to get astonishing results from people. Through case analyses and surveys, the authors uncovered five fundamental principles which they contend motivate other people, by the force of their own free wills, despite potential risk and hard work, to want "to climb to the summit."

1. **Leaders challenge the process.** All the leaders studied were involved in some kind of challenge which required a change from the status quo. The leaders were willing to step out into the unknown, willing to take risks, to innovate and experiment in order to find new and better ways of doing things. However, the leader was not always the innovator or originator of ideas, but recognized and supported the ideas. They "challenged the system" in order to get new products, processes, and services adopted.
2. **Leaders inspire a shared vision**. Leaders spend considerable effort gazing across the horizon of time imagining what it will be like when they reach their final destination. They also have the ability to inspire others to accept the vision as their own. To do this they know their followers, understand their needs and have the followers' best interests at heart. They use the premise "You can't light a fire with a wet match" and spread inspiration with their own enthusiasm.
3. **Leaders enable others to act.** Exemplary leaders enlist the support and assistance of all those who must make the project work. They involve, in every way, those who must live with the results and encourage collaboration, build teams, and empower. This way of "doing business" goes beyond immediate

subordinates to include peers, superiors, customers, suppliers--all those who must be involved to fulfill the vision.

4. **Leaders model the way.** Leaders were cognizant of their own behavior as the most powerful way to lead. "Your job gives you authority. Your behavior earns you respect," stated one of the leaders studied. They also cited consistency, persistence and attention to detail as important. These leaders were vigilant about the little things that make a big difference in an organization.
5. **Leaders encourage the heart.** Improving an organization is difficult, frustrating and disenchanting work. Leaders must encourage the heart of their followers to carry on. This involves celebrating every achievement and assuming the stance of "how would I encourage everyone if they were volunteers?"

Kouzes and Posner, like other authors, differentiate the process of leading from the process of managing. "In essence, leadership appears to be the art of getting others **to want** to do something you are convinced should be done (p. 26)." The significant word in the definition is "want." Managers get other people to do, but leaders get other people to **want to do.**

Another important study was conducted by Garfield (1987). Using the premise that peak performers are ordinary people who have found ways to make a major impact, Garfield spent 18 years investigating high achievers in a number of fields. Emerging from this study of over 500 top performers was the finding that peak performer's ability to function was neither a singular talent nor a collection of specific behaviors, but an overall pattern of behaviors and abilities. Leaders:

1. **Were motivated toward results by a personal mission.** Without exception, the focus on personal mission was present in **every** peak performer studied. In each, there existed an internal decision to excel, to achieve, to leave a mark, to make a contribution (rather than make a buck). Each visualized a

desired state of affairs that inspired their action. Dual needs of autonomy and affiliation (i.e., reward for being unique, yet pride in belonging) enabled them to "stand out" while"standing in," and pulling others along to achieve the mission. They translated the vision into language that inspired others and were able to align goals of individuals with organizational goals. In establishing a mission, they worried little about obstacles or lack of expertise ("I'll find a way!"), drew on past experience, trusted their intuition, and had no preconceived limitation about their own abilities and those of others.

2. **Achieved results in real time.** Peak performers used the mission to guide shorter range objectives. Plans for results included specific goals, methods and yardsticks (evidence of success). However, goals and methods never replaced the primary mission and became ends in themselves. These leaders were careful to cultivate the necessary skills in themselves and others to accomplish goals and focused on "learned effectiveness." They were action-oriented and wanted results in real time rather than busy work. Results came from building commitment and a collaborative work style. Even with a results orientation, they were able to handle both the micro (attention to detail) and the macro (relationship of detail) aspects of the mission.
3. **Self management through self mastery**. Peak performers share the characteristic of being information seekers and individual problem solvers. They thrive on the fact that they are accountable for the consequences of their own behavior. The peak performer's skill in self-management emerges from the personal internal skill of being able to develop one's own capabilities after assessing what they are. They tend to have self confidence, give attention to the micro and macro and are astute at mental rehearsal. They do not see themselves as finished products...they are always on the hunt for increasing self mastery.

4. **Engaging in team building/team playing, gaining leverage by empowering others to produce.** The peak performers had a general philosophy of "power given is power gained." Teamwork is a way of multiplying individual efforts by providing assistance, back-up, and cross fertilization. The peak performer, however, does not confuse this philosophy with "me-tooism," group think, or "committees that design horses but produce camels." The leader's spirit tends to keep the mission alive to others as a kind of peer pressure that enforces performance through frequent reminders of the mission and its associated standards and values. Communication is open and clear so that there is no mistake about intentions.
5. **Course Correction.** Garfield uses a quote by the inventor Buckminster Fuller to introduce the concept of course correction. "It is impossible to eliminate altogether the ship's course realterations. It is possible only to reduce the degree of successive angular errors by ever more sensitive, frequent, and gentle corrections. That's what good helmsmen or good airplane pilots do." Peak performers are willing to make appropriate changes and seize windows of opportunity. They realize that in achieving the mission one sets a critical path, not a perfect path...the most efficient and appropriate trajectory to take toward the target. They do not suffer from "paralysis of analysis." They are willing to make appropriate changes and seize "windows of opportunity." They employ three skills for course correction. They are (1) mental agility, (2) concentration on the task, and (3) learning from mistakes. They often see possibilities before others and before they are obvious.
6. **Change Management.** Peak performers know how to manage change. Managing change involves "being a student forever," expecting to succeed, mapping alternative futures, and updating the mission as appropriate. They do not resist change or try always to understand it, but they do view it as an on-

going opportunity. They make their own luck. They anticipate, adapt and act. They have an unusual tolerance for ambiguity and tend to expect the unexpected. "Being a student at every point in the management of change allows one to incorporate as much novelty as is useful in order to make sure one is making progress, and also enough consolidation(or repetition or practice) to confirm that one is actually learning the new facts and integrating them into the overall game plan. It makes use of the peak performer's openness not just to new bits of information but also to entirely new ways of handling information--new kinds of thinking" (1987, p. 263-282).

What is Meant by Leader Behavior in Schools?

Leadership, in the general sense, is necessarily constrained by the situation in which leadership is displayed. Over the past several years, much has been learned about leadership in relation to organizational context and variables that might affect a leader's effectiveness in different situations. There has been far more research on the consequences of leader behavior than on the determinants of a leader's behavior. Our understanding of these circumstances has been constrained by a prevailing view that leaders shape organizations rather than that leaders' behavior is shaped by organizations.

Three theories have served to deepen our understanding of how conditions shape leader behavior: role, expectancy, and adaptive-reactive theory. Each of these theories will be used to analyze the roles principals play in schools.

Role theory suggests that a principal's behavior is shaped by the perceptions of how other people (such as the superintendent, other principals, teachers, students, and parents) want the principal to behave. The principal's perception of these role requirements is influenced by prescriptions, such as job descriptions, day-to-day requests, and orders and directions from the superintendent. Role expectations of teachers and students are communicated in a more subtle manner. A sensitive principal soon learns to recognize and respond to these role expectations. At times, various people make incompatible demands on the principal, creating "role conflicts" (Yukl, 1981). In addition to these role expectations from other people, a principal's perception of role requirements will depend on the nature of the school's mission and tasks. Role expectations for a principal are seldom concrete or comprehensive, and the principal usually is able to shape his or her own role over time.

The second theory that has shaped our understanding of principals' behavior in schools is expectancy theory. Expectancy theory (Nebecker & Mitchell, 1974) suggests that a principal's behavior can be predicted from his or her expectations about the consequences of the behavior. For example, if principals perceive that keeping a neat, orderly building is more likely to win praise, the principal will keep a neat, orderly building. If not running a budget deficit gets the principal praise, the principal will take great care in the administration of the school budget. Research seems to have provided only modest support for such predictions of principal behavior. One determinant of principal behavior seems to be the principal's perception of likely outcomes. Principals, in other words, choose courses of action that they perceive to have a high probability of obtaining the desired outcomes. One deficiency of using expectancy theory alone is that the theory does not explain how leaders formulate expectancies or why they value some outcomes more than others.

Finally, the adaptive-reactive theory of Osborn and Hunt (1978) suggests that principal behavior is a product of larger variables such as the structure of the school, centralized v. building-based decision making, the community and district in which the school exists, and the size of the school itself. The task at hand (e.g., scheduling students, monitoring the halls) and teacher attitudes and traits also influence the way principals do their jobs. The type of school (high school, junior high or middle school, or elementary school), whether the school is large or small, whether the school is in a stable or changing community, would be more predictive of the principal's behavior. It is assumed that the principal adapts to the structure, size and external environment variables and reacts to teacher attitudes and traits--ergo, adaptive-reactive.

When any of these theories are used singly, research seems to have provided only modest support for predictions of principal behavior. Taken collectively, however, these theories seem to provide a good foundation for designing courses of action to change principal behavior. Andrews and Smith (1989) suggest that if we want our principals to be instructional leaders, we must develop job descriptions, educate teachers and parents on the value of such roles, and buffer the school from environmental or community forces that would press for managerial principal behavior.

Since 1979 when Edmonds first identified the strong leader correlate of effective schooling practices, many measures of strong leadership have been developed. These measures range from self-checklists to ratings done by teachers, supervisors, parents and students. Those that have been developed that have the greatest association with the effective schools movement have been reported by Andrews, Soder and Jacoby (1986); McCormack-Larkin, (1985); Miller (1985); Goodlad, (1984); Purkey and Smith (1982); Edmonds (1979, 1982); Murphy and Hallinger (1985); Lipham, (1981); Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee (1982); Leithwood and Montgomery (1982); Rutter et al., (1979); and Brookover (1977). How the various authors have chosen to define and measure the leadership of the school principal seems to determine the extent to which it is a key element in producing an instructionally effective school.

Over the past few years, several distinctions between more effective and less effective principals consistently emerge from the educational research. For example, Rutherford (1985, p. 32) noted that effective principals:

1. Have clear, informed visions of what they want their schools to become--visions that focus on students and their needs.
2. Translate these visions into goals for their schools and expectations for their teachers, students and administrators.

3. Continuously monitor progress.
4. Intervene in a supportive or corrective manner when this seems necessary.

Persell and Cookson (1982) reviewed more than 75 research studies and reports to identify recurrent behaviors that seem to be associated with strong principals. Their review revealed the following recurrent behaviors: (a) demonstrating a commitment to academic goals, (b) creating a climate of high expectations, (c) functioning as instructional leaders, (d) being forceful and dynamic leaders, (e) consulting effectively with others, (f) creating order and discipline, (g) marshalling resources, (h) using time well, and (i) evaluating the results.

Taken collectively these lists of characteristics suggest that strong leadership of school principals seems to be consistent with the findings of Bennis and Nanus (1988), Kouzes and Posner (1987) and Garfield (1987) on leaders of other organizations. Strong leadership means that a school principal functions as a forceful and dynamic professional through a variety of personal characteristics, including (a) high energy level, (b) assertiveness, (c) ability to assume initiative, (d) openness to new ideas, (e) high tolerance for ambiguity, (f) sense of humor, (g) analytic ability and (h) practical stance toward life.

In sum, the principal who displays strong instructional leadership:

1. Places priority on curriculum and instruction issues.
2. Is dedicated to the goals of the school and the school district.
3. Is able to rally and mobilize resources to accomplish the goals of the school.
4. Creates a climate of high expectations in the school, characterized by a tone of respect for teachers, students, parents, and community.
5. Functions as a leader with direct involvement in instructional policy by:
    a. communicating with teachers;
    b. supporting and/or participating in staff development activities;
    c. establishing teaching incentives for the use of new instructional strategies; and
    d. having knowledge of district-adopted curriculum materials.

6. Continually monitors both student progress toward school achievement and teacher effectiveness as:
    a. teacher evaluation is characterized by frequent classroom visitations, clear evaluative criteria, frequent evaluation and feedback; and
    b. evaluations are used to help students and teachers improve performance.
7. Demonstrates a commitment to academic goals, shown by the ability to develop and articulate a clear vision of long term goals for the school, and strong achievement goals that are consistent with district goals and priorities.
8. Effectively consults with others by involving the faculty and others in school decision processes:
    a. teachers feel they are genuinely encouraged to exchange ideas;
    b. effectively functioning coalitions support the operation of the school;
    c. constituent groups share a commitment to the academic mission of the school; and
    d. a critical constructive force in the school encourages inquiry and change.
9. Effectively and efficiently mobilizes resources such as materials, time, and support to enable the school and its personnel to meet academic goals.
10. Recognizes time as a scarce resource and creates order and discipline by minimizing factors that may disrupt the learning process.

What Are the Principal's Leadership Roles?

Andrews and his associates at the University of Washington have used the responses of over 2,100 teachers and a team of 53 practicing educators and professors to organize these general descriptors into four broad areas of strategic interactions between the school principal and teachers. Using data from 100 schools in a single school district, they divided schools into three groups and analyzed student achievement outcomes (Andrews, Soder & Jacoby, 1985a; Andrews & Soder, 1987a; Andrews & Smith, 1989). The researchers found that when these behavioral descriptors were used to group schools in which teachers perceived their principals as strong, average, or weak instructional leaders, they found significant differences in incremental growth in student academic achievement. Schools led by principals who were perceived by their teachers to be strong instructional leaders exhibited significantly greater gains in achievement scores in reading and mathematics than did schools operated by average and weak instructional leaders.

The four areas of strategic interaction that allow principals to orchestrate the behavior of teachers toward attaining the achievement goals of the school are:

- THE PRINCIPAL AS RESOURCE PROVIDER
- THE PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE
- THE PRINCIPAL AS COMMUNICATOR
- THE PRINCIPAL AS VISIBLE PRESENCE

Principal as Resource Provider

As resource provider, the principal takes those actions necessary to marshal personal, building, district and community resources to achieve the vision and goals of the school. Personnel in the school are assigned with careful consideration for their strengths in content knowledge and personal skills. Personnel outside of the school are drawn into the environment to assist staff with solving instructional problems and capitalizing on opportunities. Materials appropriate for the curriculum are provided through skillful management of the instructional budget, with provision for staff input into budgetary processes. The entire budget process is viewed as a professional activity that enables the school staff to maximize scarce resources and to set priorities for expenditures. Information is power, and the instructional leader shares data with staff members that enable them to participate knowledgeably in decision-making. Group processes are employed by the principal to utilize the most appropriate expertise and to make certain that up-to-date information flows through the school. Opportunities for new resources are sought by the principal--grants, workshops, professional conferences, inservice training, college courses, volunteer services; all are examined in terms of their value to the school's goals and priorities.

The principal as resource provider is well supported in the literature. For example, Persell and Cookson (1982) found that successful principals were good at acquiring needed materials. One leader who was particularly successful in implementing Public Law 94-142 was "unusually adept at getting what he desired from the higher levels of the school system, and was able to bring this talent into the service of children with special needs." Success at procuring needed materials may be due to both administrative skills and school district conditions. Restraints may be set by legal conditions, collective bargaining agreements, past history, or a variety of other factors that need to be considered. On the other hand, while contextual constraints may exist, individuals can react and hence act in quite different ways, given the same set of conditions. The range of individual practices among the principals in any given system is quite great, and a major factor that explains that variation is how individual principals conceive of the system (Sarason, 1971).

The routine administrative tasks--discipline, providing an orderly school climate, personnel management, facilities management, budget, etc., are all a part of mobilizing resources. The importance of the managerial aspects should not be minimized. The effective principal, nevertheless, seems to be able to blend and balance these elements through time management. Certainly the size of the school, the experience of the staff, and the support and priorities of the central office may all be intervening variables that have some impact on the principal's ability to blend and balance the behaviors associated with strong leadership. The point here is not to detail what the effective schools research says about orderly, purposeful climate or what leadership and managerial research says about the best way to prepare a budget, select a teacher, delegate responsibility, or manage time. It is, however, important to briefly discuss the mobilizer of resources in theoretical terms, and therefore it is important for the strong instructional leader to be able to analyze and understand the resources he or she is to manage.

Educational organizations, rather than being tightly connected and controlled, are often described as "loosely coupled" (Weick, 1982). Weick noted that one of the reasons schools may be ineffective is that they are managed with the wrong theory in mind. Weick argues that we assume schools to be self-correcting organizations staffed by people who are interdependent, have consensus on goals, and have predictable problems and solutions. He notes that, in fact, none of these characteristics are true of schools and how they function. Effective school administrators in "loosely coupled" schools, he observed, need to take advantage of symbol management to tie the system together. He further noted that:

> People need to be part of sensible projects. Their action becomes richer, more confident and more satisfying when it is linked with important underlying themes, values and movement . . . administrators must be attentive to the 'glue' that holds loosely coupled systems together because such forms are just barely systems (p. 675).

Weick also reminds us that:

> The administrator who manages symbols does not just sit in his or her office mouthing clever slogans. Eloquence must be disseminated. And since channels are unpredictable, administrators must get out of their offices and spend lots of time one-on-one--both to remind people of central visions and to assist them in applying these visions to their own activities. The administrator teaches people to interpret what they are doing in a common language (p. 676).

Sergiovanni (1984) contends that schools are both tightly and loosely coupled. Sergiovanni noted that excellent schools have a clear sense of purpose and structure, yet at the same time, a great deal of freedom is allowed for staff and students as to how the purpose is to be realized. This combination of a tight structure and a loose structure, Sergiovanni asserted, gives meaning and control, and yet allows people to experience success.

Sergiovanni's assertion that the school organization is both loosely and tightly coupled suggests that the daily operation of a school is a complex task in a complex organizational environment. Recognition by the strong leader that management of these resources cannot be addressed by simple formulas or by emphasizing one element of leadership at the expense of the other elements is a key acknowledgment on the principal's part. Recognition or acceptance of a concept (problem or challenge) is often the first step in resolution or management of the concept.

In essence, strong instructional leaders have the capacity to mobilize available resources in order to implement policies that lead to desired outcomes. In order to mobilize his or her other resources, a principal must have a good grasp of the possible and the ability to convince potentially competing groups to work together. Effective leaders apply, intuitively, the theories that see leadership as systems of individuals and resources, and that recognize appropriate substitutes for leadership (Manasse, 1984).

Effective principals view resource provision in terms of maximizing instructional effectiveness and student achievement. They view resource provision as more than money or supplies; rather, as encouragement of human resources that assist the faculty and students in their efforts to achieve success. Effective principals have the capacity and energy to closely monitor all aspects of the school program--teaching, learning and the environment. Strong instructional leaders have the ability to analyze and manage resources in a way that allows the entire school community to realize its potential.

The success of the principal in mobilizing resources is reflected in the following dimensions of the instructional leadership role:

Mobilizing and Using Resources.

1. The instructional leader can demonstrate effective use of time and resources.
    a. Can carefully plan, organize, schedule, and prioritize work to be done.
    b. Can delegate work as appropriate.
    c. Can assign staff according to their strengths.
2. The instructional leader can demonstrate skill as a change master by establishing an ongoing process for planning and making necessary changes within the school while developing a feeling of individual/group ownership.
    a. Can create a positive climate for change and nurture creative approaches to change.
    b. Can use skills needed to manage change.
    c. Can evaluate the effectiveness of change.

3. The instructional leader can demonstrate the ability to motivate the staff.
    a. Can state clear expectations to the staff.
    b. Can provide clear feedback.
    c. Encourages the staff to take risks and to innovate.
4. The instructional leader knows staff members' strengths and weaknesses and is knowledgeable about instructional resources that may be helpful to them.
    a Can match staff members needs to staff development opportunities.
    b. Is knowledgeable about resources that enhance instruction.
    c. Mobilizes resources and district support to help achieve academic goals.
    d. Can convince staff members that they are important instructional resource people in the school.

One should note that these are only some descriptive behaviors. There are many others.

Principal as Instructional Resource

As Instructional Resource, the principal is actively engaged in the improvement of classroom circumstances that enhance learning. Through ongoing dialogue with the staff, the principal encourages the use of a variety of instructional materials and teaching strategies. The principal is sought out by teachers who have instructional concerns or innovative ideas. Clinical supervision complements teacher evaluation, with the emphasis being placed on continuing professional growth and development for everyone on the staff, including the principal. The principal and the staff consider evaluation the highest level of cognition to be cyclical in nature. The most obvious role of the principal as an instructional resource is to facilitate good teaching and quality curriculum.

In order to facilitate good teaching, the principal must stay abreast of new developments in materials and strategies for improving instruction. The principal maintains a personal development program that includes regular review of educational research, curriculum development, and new advances in our understanding of how children learn.

The most consistent finding in the majority of studies of school effectiveness is the crucial connection between expectation and achievement. What these studies seem to say to us is that teachers and students live up to our expectations for them (Brookover and Lezotte, 1977; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Outson, & Smith, 1979). When the goals of the school are clear, reasonable, uniform, and perceived as important, and when the staff is committed to them, successful schools seem to result. In these and similar studies, researchers consistently emphasize the important role of the principal in establishing vision, expectations, and commitment to goals. As indicated earlier, the important point is that the more effective schools have a shared vision, and the strong instructional leader is responsible for developing the process for establishing and communicating the vision.

The principal must give attention to differences in staff members' attitudes about student ability to learn (Austin, 1979; Edmonds, 1979) and to the feelings of both teachers and students that what they do makes a difference (Sergiovanni, 1984). According to Gauthier (1980, p. 16-17), "Every school must believe that all children can learn and that all teachers and administrators can help them."

The more effective principals provided not only specific details about performance of their teachers but also insights into why the teachers performed as they did (Rutherford, 1985). A way that principals play a significant role in the school effort is through monitoring individual teachers' work and assisting teachers in mastering changes of classroom practice that will result in increased student outcomes.

The effective principal is actively involved in all aspects of the instructional program, sets expectations for continuous improvement and collegiality, models the kinds of behaviors they desire, participates in inservice training with teachers and consistently gives priority to instructional concerns.

The role of instructional resource requires the principal to be knowledgeable about teaching. Sapone (1985) maintains that any school can increase school efficiency and effectiveness if the school principal is able to demonstrate curriculum and instructional leadership. She suggests that it makes little difference what model is used; what is important is consistency in the use of a total curriculum plan/model as developed and implemented within the school and as advocated and endorsed by the staff and the school principal. In other words, the instructional resource role of the principal is to insure that teachers have a well-designed curricular program and that meaningful teaching is critical to that design. Similarly, Lipham (1981) suggested that the improvement of teaching and learning is the foremost function of the principal. He concluded that principals must do more than just "know about" the instructional program; they must be "intimately involved in its development, implementation, evaluation, and refinement." In exemplary schools, the principal shows strong knowledge of and participation in instructional activities (Austin, 1979; Fullan, 1981).

Although a principal may not have specific knowledge of every curricular area taught in the school, his or her knowledge should at least embrace the general trends and movement within each subject area. The effective principal must have sufficient knowledge to understand and evaluate curricular innovations that are being tried in schools throughout the country. The principal must be familiar with effective teaching methods and the principles of learning. When principals know the basics of learning and instruction they can help teachers improve, regardless of the subject matter.

The success of the principal as an Instructional Resource is reflected in the following dimensions of the instructional leadership role:

Serving as an Instructional Resource.

1. The instructional leader can demonstrate the ability to evaluate and reinforce appropriate and effective instructional strategies.
    a. Knows and can share the latest research findings on teaching and learning with the staff so new ideas are tried.

   b. Can express knowledge of effective strategies for students in different age groups.
   c. Can use knowledge and skill in effective instructional strategies.
2. The instructional leader supervises the staff, using strategies that focus on the improvement of instruction.
   a. Can document instructional performance of teachers.
   b. Can conduct post-conferences that include developmental objectives suggested by staff member or administrator.
   c. Provides staff members with evidence of continuity between clinical supervision observations.
3. In the process of assessing the educational program, the instructional leader uses student outcome information that is directly related to instructional issues.
   a. Can read and interpret district standardized and criterion referenced test information.
   b. Can develop intervention procedures designed to identify strengths and remediate weaknesses.
   c. Can identify uses of external consultant evaluation assistance where needed.
4. The instructional leader can demonstrate successful application of the district's personnel evaluation policies.
   a. Can design appropriate annual evaluation cycles to include effective goal setting with the employee and appropriate measurement of these goals.
   b. Effectively conferences with employees regarding performance.
5. The instructional leader knows the importance of student learning objectives to the implementation of the instructional program.
   a. Can communicate to staff and community the extent to which learning objectives for the school have been mastered.
   b. Can assist teachers in the mastery of student learning objectives.

It should be noted that these are some among other tasks.

Principal as Communicator

As Communicator, the principal articulates a vision of the school that provides a road map for everyone in the school to be headed in the same direction. The day-to-day behavior of the principal communicates that the principal has a firm understanding of the purpose of schooling and can translate that meaning into programs and activities within the school. Communicating effectively in the school requires skills beyond the interpersonal level.

Effective communication must be displayed at three levels: one-to-one, small-group, and articulation of the vision of the school to the school district, parents, and the larger community. The principal as communicator has mastered confrontation and active listening skills, can facilitate the work of leaderless groups, and understands how to communicate school direction to those outside forces that would move the school in directions other than the direction that has been determined between the staff and the principal.

The principal uses communication as the basis for development of sound trust relationships with staff through behavior that is consistent, objective and fair. The principal communicates in such a way that both the content and processes for communication are explicit within the school. What topics, for example, may be discussed openly by the entire staff, by parent-staff councils, by students and staff, or by supervisor-teacher dyads? What structures and processes will be used by what groups to make which decisions about the governance of the school? To what degree will autonomy be given to the staff in the decision-making processes? Which decisions will be made by the principal with the advice and counsel of the staff? How do building decisions fit into the scheme of the school district's processes? All of these questions must be answered through the principal's leadership and communication with the staff.

Communication processes are important. The principal makes a commitment to those processes in establishing school goals, together with the staff, parents, and students. Resources are committed to the goals, and evaluation systems are established. Frequent reference is made to goals, and classroom observations, inservice topics, and faculty meetings focus on those priorities.

How instructional leaders identify and communicate a vision for the school varies, based on the style of leadership of the school principal (Andrews, Soder, & Jacoby, 1985b; Andrews & Soder, 1987b). The salient message is that the strong principal has a vision and is able to clearly articulate that vision. Communication of vision is perhaps the most important way for a principal to exert effective leadership. It leaves no doubt about school priorities. Sergiovanni (1984) described communication of vision as "purposing." Purposing is the process of emphasizing selective attention and modeling important goals and behaviors in such a manner that it signals others of what is of importance and value in the school.

Principals as leaders of high-performing systems have well-defined basic purposes on which they focus their organizational energy and resources. Their leadership is strong and focused, directed toward creating a commitment to purpose. Their leaders are aware of the value of symbolic actions and the influence of culture on productive organizational climates. Effective principals have a vision of their schools and of their role in making the vision become a reality. Vail (1982) also incorporated "vision" into his concept of purposing. Purposing is a continuous stream of actions by an organization's formal leadership that has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organization's basic purposes. Vail found that leaders of high performing systems have strong feelings about the attainment of purposes, maintain focus on issues and variables, and put in extraordinary amounts of time to achieve their purposes.

Principals in effective schools consistently demonstrate a commitment to academic goals. They are able to develop and articulate a vision of instructional goals that prioritize school and classroom activities (Bamburg & Andrews, 1988). Most important, this vision serves as a mechanism for coherence and integration in instructional planning by the school staff. The ways this vision is used to provide instructional leadership are documented in a number of studies. For example, goals are used to clarify expectations for program implementation (Dow & Whitehead, 1980). Effective principals use goals to provide a focus for communication, conveying support of the enthusiasm for goal-related work and for conveying school needs to district administrators (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Reinhardt, Arends, Burns, Kutz, & Wyant, 1979). The vision established by the instructional leader and the process for the development of vision helps provide a climate of high expectations and mutual respect among staff members and students within the school (Persell & Cookson, 1982).

Leaders typically engage in symbolic aspects of leadership by working beneath the surface of events and activities, searching for deeper meaning and value. Indeed, these leaders bring to the school a sense of drama in human life that permits persons to rise above the daily routine. They are able to see the significance of what a group is doing and could be doing. They have a feel for the dramatic possibilities inherent in most situations and are able to urge people to go beyond the routine--to break out of the mold into something more lively and meaningful. Finally, symbolic leaders are able to communicate their sense of vision by word and example. They use easily understood language and symbols that communicate a sense of purpose so that they might come to share in the ownership of the school enterprise more fully. Vision then becomes the substance of what is communicated as symbolic aspects of leadership are emphasized (Sergiovanni, 1984).

The literature seems to suggest that effective principals have a clear vision of and are strongly oriented to school goals (Rosenblum & Jastrzab, 1975). This vision is reflected in the principals' long-term goals and visions for their schools and teachers (Hall, Rutherford, Hord, & Huling, 1984). Clear vision seems to allow school principals to organize the school activities so that they are not continually putting out "brush fires"

(Blumberg & Greenfield in Fullan, 1981). The role of the principal in communicating the vision of the school has been described by Sergiovanni (1984) as the "high priest"--one who seeks to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its identity. The net effect of the behaviors and processes associated with vision communication is to bond together students, the staff, parents, and the community as believers in the work of the school.

Teachers perceive that communication with principals who are strong instructional leaders results in improved instructional practice in their classrooms, helps them to understand the relationship between instructional practices and student achievement, provides a basis for clearly understanding evaluative criteria, and a clear sense of the direction of the school (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Andrews, Soder, & Jacoby, 1985).

The success of the principal as a good communicator is reflected in part in the following dimensions of the instructional leadership role:

Serving as a Good Communicator.

1. The instructional leader demonstrates the ability to evaluate and deal effectively with others.
    a. Can engage in two-way communication accurately with sensitivity and reliability.
    b. Can promote mutual conflict resolution, problem-solving, cooperation, and sharing.
    c. Can recognize what information is appropriate to communicate.
2. The instructional leader demonstrates the ability to speak and write clearly and concisely.
    a. Displays good organizational skills in oral and written communication.
    b. Demonstrates coherence in oral and written communication.
    c. Recognizes needs and interacts appropriately with specific audiences in the educational community.

3. The instructional leader possesses and applies skills and strategies of conflict management that satisfy the interests of both parties in a practical and acceptable manner.
    a. Can see others' points of view and clearly articulate the conflict situations.
    b. Displays the ability to help others arrive at mutually acceptable solutions.
    c. Effectively manages conflict.
4. The instructional leader facilitates groups in selecting courses of action through using problem-solving techniques.
    a. Can identify and collect valid, relevant, and reliable information to accurately assess the current situation.
    b. Can develop and effectively analyze solutions to complex problems.
    c. Can develop an implementation plan that includes provisions for evaluation.
5. The instructional leader demonstrates the ability to effectively use a variety of group process skills in interaction with the staff, parents, and students.
    a. Can help others to develop a commitment to a process for goal achievement.
    b. Can assist in formulating the final outcome in a way that can be clearly understood and applied.
    c. Can develop and implement procedures for evaluating both process and outcome.
6. The instructional leader can demonstrate skill in working as a team member.
    a. Can assess strengths and weaknesses of team members.
    b. Has strong group process skills.
    c. Can subjugate personal goals to the goals of the group.

Principal as Visible Presence

As a visible presence, the principal is in and around classrooms and hallways, attends grade-level and departmental meetings, and holds spontaneous conversations with teachers. Most important, however, the presence of the principal is felt throughout the school as the keeper of the vision. The principal displays this presence by constantly modeling behavior that reinforces the values of the school. The principal knows on a first-hand basis what is going on in the school daily. The values of the school are codified in the behavioral pattern of the principal as he/she buffers the direction of the school against external pressures to adapt to special interests. The presence of the principal is felt in formal and informal observations of classroom teachers. The principal follows up these observations by communicating praise for good things that are happening both verbally and through informal written notes to teachers.

The visible presence of the principal appears to be most keenly felt when the principal serves as rewarder. As a rewarder, the principal gives positive attention to both staff and student accomplishments. Brookover et al. (1982) suggests that setting up an award system that clearly "strokes" staff and students for academic success is perhaps the most important aspect of creating an effective school. Acknowledging the earned achievements of others is a regular course of events by principals who are strong instructional leaders (Giammatteo & Giammatteo, 1981). Being positive, cheerful, and encouraging; making themselves accessible to the staff, making their presence felt often by moving around the building; doing things with teachers; involving and getting the staff to express and set their own goals--all these are overlapping characteristics of positive school climates and effective principals. (Iannaccone & Jamgochian, 1985).

In high-achieving compared to low-achieving schools, principals emphasized instruction as the most important goal of the school (Brookover et al., 1979). One indicator of consensus on commitment to the goals of academic achievement is reflected in the way principals expected teachers to give of their personal time. In the schools with higher achievement, teachers were willing to do this, but in those with lower achievement, teachers were not willing to give extra time unless they were paid for it. One way that principals were able to get greater teacher commitment was by being role models themselves. When the principal put in long hours, was fair-minded in dealing with student complaints, and attended student activities in the school and the community, it set a positive tone for both teachers and students.

Effective elementary school principals expressed dissatisfaction with their day if their presence was not felt in every classroom. Middle/junior high and high school principals felt their week was not successful unless they had been in every classroom at least once.

Teachers perceive principals to be a visible presence when their principals make frequent classroom observations, are accessible to discuss matters dealing with instruction, are regularly seen in and about the building, and are active participants in staff development activities.

The success of the principal as a Visible Presence is reflected in part in the following dimensions of the instructional leadership role:

Serving as a Visible Presence.

1. The instructional leader works cooperatively with the staff and the community to develop clear goals that relate to the district's mission.
   a. Can clearly express a vision for the school.
   b. Can organize people and resources to accomplish building and district goals.
2. The instructional leader will demonstrate that he or she is visible to the staff, students, and parents at the building site.
   a. Can drop into classrooms on an informal basis without disrupting the instructional process.
   b. Can display behavior consistent with the articulated vision for the school.
   c. Can defer other matters and actively participate in staff development activities.
   d. Can effectively buffer the school from the external environment.
3. The instructional leader can demonstrate that he or she is visible to the staff, students, and parents at the school site.

a. Manages time so that during school hours the principal is out and around.

b. Hears others express an understanding of the priority goals of the school.

c. Can clearly communicate the obligations of educators for student learning.

How Can Empowerment Be Used As the Critical Leadership Tool for Internal Renewal?

John Goodlad in A Place Called School (1984) states, "Education is a human enterprise. Renewal must take place in the heads and hearts of people. And while we tighten the procedures, we must find ways to give more participation and more empowerment to those who do the work" (p. 303).

This quote communicates well the philosophy about people and change advocated in the effective schools framework. School improvement that results in a "teaching for learning for all" school culture starts with individuals. Their aggregate behavior shapes the culture and their individual interactions with children communicate in hundreds of ways their beliefs about the child's efficacy.

The old saying "you can't give what you don't have" provides a succinct rationale for empowerment in schools. Perhaps we cannot give children a belief in themselves if the adults in the building feel powerless or victimized. If the goal of schooling is to empower young people with choices, perhaps the goal of leadership is to define clearly the goals of the organization and empower those in the organization to make appropriate choices to reach the goals.

But does an empowering style of leadership contribute to the productivity of the organization? Is this yet another educational bandwagon? The current leadership books reviewed agree "Power given is power gained." A common characteristic of high performing leaders is their capacity and ability to take a **group** in a predetermined direction. It is through this multiplication of energies that the incremental steps of change are completed and ultimately the mission accomplished. Any leader who is driven by a need to have a hands-on approach to running every aspect of the organization finds that he/she quickly runs out of hands. Furthermore, any leader who does not tap the strengths of employees is handicapped by the limits of his/her own energy and creativity, no matter how great they may be.

Particularly in the last several years, researchers have examined the benefits of this type of leadership as it applies to schools and school systems. Their findings support empowerment. For example, John Chubb, Brookings Institute (1987) concluded in his study of high schools that the more control a school has over those aspects of its organization that affect its performance--the articulation of its goals, the selection and management of its personnel, the specification of its policies the more likely the school is to exhibit the qualities that have been found to promote effectiveness. In his statistical analysis of schools characterized by such consensus, Chubb derived a mathematical benefit of one full additional year of learning for students enrolled in such schools.

School personnel also accrue benefits from this style of leadership. Teachers who feel they are influential in decisions are more innovative and more likely to share their ideas with other teachers. Teachers involved in decision-making have higher morale, more positive feelings about school leaders, increased commitment to the school, and lower absenteeism and turnover. There are improved management decisions, greater acceptance of change, enhanced cooperation and reduced conflict, and more effective enforcement of discipline (Chubb, 1987).

What Are the Common Beliefs That Enable Leadership?

Choosing to operate an organization in this manner is difficult for many. This style of leadership stems from deep beliefs about people and what causes them to perform. "Employees bring their own motivation. What people need from work is to be liberated, to be involved, to be accountable, and to reach for their potential." With this view of people, leadership them becomes the liberation of talent, rather than restraint by rule.

The Center for Creative Leadership in North Carolina studied several young executives who had peaked early and "lost it" either by being fired or asked to resign. This resulted because many of them in their haste to meet goals had bullied and pushed subordinates. Behaviorists feel that this method of leadership pushes people into survival thinking and into "my safety" and "my future" instead of "our" and "we." William Ouchi, Theory Z (1981), explains this as a kind of regression in Maslow's hierarchy of needs to lower-level safety needs as opposed to the higher-level "self actualization" needs of collaboration and affiliation. Ouchi also indicates that to be successful we must rely on "pull power" rather than "push power." The human response to pull power is fueled by a desire to expand one's possibilities, to contribute to the organization and the world around one--in short the need for "self actualization."

A reflection of the beliefs of outstanding leaders are as follows:

1. People are people...not personnel.
2. People don't dislike work... help them to understand mutual objectives and they'll drive themselves to unbelievable excellence.
3. The best way to really train people is with an experienced mentor and on-the-job training.
4. People have ego and development needs; they'll commit themselves only to the extent that they can see ways of satisfying these needs.
5. People cannot be truly motivated by anyone else...that door is locked from the inside; they should work in an atmosphere that fosters self motivation...self assessment...and self-confidence.
6. People should work in a climate that is challenging, invigorating and fun. The rewards should be related as directly as possible to performance.
7. When people are in an atmosphere of trust, they'll put themselves at risk. Only through risk is there growth.

What Will Empowerment and Change do to the School System As An Organization?

The educational change research indicates that the most effective unit for change is the school. Change efforts focused on districts as a whole often suffer because districts are too large, too complex organizationally and perceived as being too removed from the "trenches" to be an effective and credible conduit for change. Change efforts, regardless of their intent or value often are rejected if perceived as being a "district mandate."

Change efforts focused on individual teaching on the other hand, have usually resulted in limited organizational change, lacking the scope of change needed for significant impact on improving education overall. Organizational barriers are not altered, teaching environments are not changed and school-wide cross-functional issues are not addressed when the change focus is on the classroom teacher only. School-wide factors can enhance or hinder successful teacher improvement efforts and must be an integral part of any school change program. While individual teacher-focused change, like the effective teaching research, is a necessary and important component of any improvement effort, it is not, in itself, enough to bring about comprehensive and lasting change in a complex social organization such as a school.

Successful and comprehensive change is most often the result of a carefully planned effort--focused on the individual school, actively supported by the district, and collaboratively planned and implemented by the teachers and the other staff within the school.

The role of the district office in supporting school-based change is often omitted from discussions on educational change and school improvement. The importance of district leadership's contribution to the "technological core" of effective schools has been documented (Peterson, Murphy, & Hallinger, 1987; Pollack, Watson & Chrispeels, 1987). The relationships and functions of both the district and school levels must be addressed if comprehensive and lasting change is to be a reality. The district office must have a "loose-tight" relationship with schools in allowing them a high degree of autonomy but with an equally high degree of accountability in reaching educational outcomes.

Setting Mission, Goals and Outcomes

The first step in establishing this district-school relationship is to clearly delineate the roles and functions of district offices and schools in the overall operation of school districts. A major district-level function is the determination of the district's mission, goals, exit outcomes and standards. This is not done in isolation. District leaders solicit and receive input from school personnel, parents, taxpayers in general, employers, and school board members. They utilize student data, educational research and other sources important in determining the educational priorities and outcomes of the district.

After the district mission, goals, exit outcomes, and standards are established, specific grade level and course exit outcomes leading to the accomplishment of the district exit outcomes must be determined. These outcomes must be standard across all schools in the district. The successful accomplishment of these outcomes must be the driving force behind all decisions, resource allocations and activities of the entire school district at all levels.

The accomplishment of the identified outcomes must be reinforced by the district and an accountability process must be established. Accountability processes and standards must be set for the Board of Education, Superintendent, Central Office personnel, school leaders, teachers and support staff.

Identifying and Communicating the Non-Negotiables

District leaders must also communicate any "non-negotiables" so that school leaders can address them in their site-level planning and implementation. Non-negotiables are the unalterable parameters such as common district-wide textbook selection, common starting and ending school times, common philosophy on good teaching, the necessity of including multicultural concepts in learning activities, and budget limitations.

Negotiating School Level Goals

District leaders and school leaders must negotiate annual and long-range goals for each school. These goals may vary depending on the gap at each school between the current goal attainment and the desired district goal attainment. Central office administrators realize the difficulty of implementation and the responsibilities. Murphy and Hallinger (1986) and Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger (1987) concluded after a study of twelve California school districts that superintendents were "actively involved" and "influential" in developing both district and school goals.

After the goals in each school are established and the accountability processes are in place, each school has autonomy to develop school improvement plans to move them toward the accomplishment of the agreed-upon goals. The plans developed within the parameters of the budget and other non-negotiables can reflect the unique conditions, skills, needs and interests of staff, students and parents at each school. To put it simply, each school can use its staff to design "their own best way" to bring about the desired results. The approach results in a high degree of "buy-in" by the staff and allows them to build upon their strengths and the uniqueness of their community.

After the school plans have been developed, the role of the district office becomes one of supporting implementation of the plans.

Support for Curriculum and Instruction

The district office assists schools in managing the curriculum and instructional programs by providing a high quality curriculum that is based on district exit outcomes and is coordinated and articulated across grade levels, courses, and schools; by coordinating and leading efforts to articulate special programs with the core program; by providing resources to schools for students who do not meet district academic and behavioral standards; by assisting schools in utilizing grouping strategies that allow all students equal access to high quality educational opportunities; by providing feedback to schools about ways to improve their curriculum and instructional programs; and by protecting schools from inappropriate time-consuming activities.

Support for Program Effectiveness Assessment

The district office also assists schools in assessing educational effectiveness by providing district-wide assessment of student performance in all areas at all grade levels each year with tests that are aligned with the district's curriculum and which provide multiple measures of student performance with incremental student growth comparisons. The district also assists the school in interpreting the test data in aggregated and various disaggregated forms including socioeconomic status, race and gender, and assists the school staff in interpretation of the data for program improvement. The district provides the school with a management system that uses assessment data to record student educational progress so that it can be communicated within the school, between the district and school, and between the school and the home.

Resource Support

Resources are provided by the district to support school-developed activities designed to assist students in mastering grade level and course outcomes. The allocation of these resources is aligned to the district and school goals, and is adequate and fairly distributed. The principal and staff have discretion in the allocation of human and fiscal resources within the framework of district priorities. Personnel selection criteria are based on the needs of the school's program and site principals are directly involved in recommending appointments to their schools. District policies and practices are such that they attract and retain the highest qualified personnel.

Support of a Positive Work Environment at the District and School Levels

The district's policies must promote success among the staff and students. There are district procedures for identifying and publicly recognizing high performance by students. School staffs feel they have input into the development of district goals, programs, policies, and procedures. District leaders encourage communication and collaboration among school personnel by providing time for staff to get together professionally. There is harmony between the Superintendent and Board of Education with each agreeing to their mutual roles and responsibilities. Conflicts between the Board and staff are easily and quickly resolved and the district sees that the schools are clean, well maintained and safe.

Support for Making Improvement

District leaders express and model the theme of continuous improvement in district planning, discussions, operations and publications. District staff perceive the school as the unit of change and see their roles in supporting successful school-based change. The district provides reasonable timelines for school improvement and encourages all staff to take risks in school improvement efforts. Research findings such as those found in the effective schools research, effective teaching research, organizational development research and educational change research are provided to schools by the district. The district has effective monitoring systems to assist schools in determining needs for improvement. District leaders hold themselves, the Board of Education, school leaders and school staff accountable for achieving school and district goals. The professional expertise of teachers and administrators is valued and used by the district. All professional development activities are related to district goals and school improvement activities. District leaders give principals authority to modify instructional practices to address unique school needs and differences.

Support in Working with the Community

The district values and rewards staff responsiveness and accessibility to parents. Schools receive district assistance in such areas as effective two-way home-school communications, in ways to communicate test results to parents and in effective use of community agencies and resources. The district assists schools in providing opportunities for parents to become involved in the education of their children and in becoming more effective parents and supporters of the school's efforts with their children. Parents and the community are involved in the development of district goals, programs and policies so that they reflect the highest priority needs of the community.

Since the focus of all school and district activities should be on increasing the level of success for all students on the identified district outcomes, ways must be found in education to implement employee empowerment processes. The implementation of the effective schools process provides significant opportunities for employee involvement and empowerment. School improvement teams are clearly the vehicle for involving staff at all levels in using the effective schools data as the focus of collaborative discussions and planning for improvement. Direct involvement and input from teachers, for example, is at the heart of the effective schools process. Using the effective schools data, school planning teams can make research-based, data-driven decisions about how to improve the effectiveness of the school's program for all students.

The empowerment movement provides some dilemmas and potential changes that must be considered.

1. District and school leaders must be given training in group process. Strategies and techniques will move collaboration and discussion into direct action plans with a consensus of differing points of views and opinions.
2. Many educators are not trained in clearly and precisely identifying problems, their root causes, and appropriate solutions. There is a tendency for many educators to jump to solutions without employing cause and effect analysis.
3. Collaboration takes time. Large amounts of time will have to be provided to employees if they are to be significantly involved.
4. The philosophy of decentralized management must prevail both at the district and school levels if employee empowerment is utilized. If suggestions from empowered employees are not implemented, the employees will become cynical and stop participating in the process.

5. The use of input and the types of decisions made by empowered groups must be clearly communicated. Groups need to know when they are asked for "advisory" input to management and when they are the actual decision-makers.
6. There is a danger that employee empowerment can be manipulated by such outside forces as unions or by the district itself.

What Is Required of Leadership in the Change Process?

Rosabeth Moss-Kanter in Change Masters (1983) says:

> Corporate change--rebuilding if you will-- has parallels to the most ambitious and perhaps most noble of the plastic arts, **architecture.** The skill of corporate leaders, the ultimate change masters, lies in their ability to envision a new reality and aid in its translation into concrete terms. Creative visions combined with the building up of events, floor by floor, from foundation to completed construction...It consists of the ability to conceive, construct, and convert into behavior a new view of organizational reality (p. 278).

Change in school systems is not unlike change in any organization. It requires a leader's ability to set forth a picture of a new reality (vision) and ability to create the organizational structures to realize the vision. If one continues the architecture analogy, leadership for productive change is both an artistic and technical venture.

To begin thinking about change as it relates to the effective schools process, it's helpful to define what is meant by change in this context. This school improvement process is not a project with a beginning and ending date. It is not technical tinkering with a specific aspect of the curriculum or the organization. It is not something that the leader delegates to others to "implement." It is a total way of doing business, a "School of Thought" about how and toward what ends school improvement should be targeted...a process of cultural change within the individual schools in the district.

Every organization has a culture, a set of norms, attitudes, and beliefs that define its uniqueness (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). This culture is played out in virtually every action of the organization. In schools, we can "observe" the culture in literally hundreds of ways...use of time, student grouping patterns, decision-making processes, celebrations, school heroes and heroines, characteristics of the physical facility, and the ways that adults and students interact. **Cultural** change in schools involves all those things in the structure, individual behaviors, and assumptions, norms and values that shape teaching and learning in the school.

Several noted authors present definitions of cultural change. Deal and Kennedy, in Corporate Cultures (1982), define it as follows:

> When we speak of organizational change, we mean real changes in the behavior of people throughout the organization. In a technical sense we mean people in the organization identifying with new role model heroes. We mean people telling different stories to one another to explain what is occurring around them. We mean people spending their time differently on a day to day basis--calling on different accounts, asking different questions, carrying out different work rituals. And we mean that the behavior is **pervasive**--to involve virtually all the people in the organization. This kind of deep-seated cultural change is what we mean when we say that change takes a long time to achieve (p. 158).

Kanter, in Change Masters (1983) defines change in a similar manner:

> Change involves the crystallization of new action possibilities (new policies, new behaviors, new patterns, new methodology, new products, or new market strategies) based on reconceptualized patterns in the organization. The architecture of change involves the design and construction of new patterns, or the reconceptualization of old ones, to make new, and hopefully more productive, actions possible (p. 279).

With these definitions of change, we can understand why it is so difficult to achieve. The good news that tempers this somewhat ominous task is that we have considerable evidence that cultural change is possible. We have verification from large corporations and from school systems all over the United States and abroad. (Taylor, 1990). **The good news is that cultures can be reconstructed and transformed.**

In achieving these successes, are their lessons in leadership that can benefit others? There are certainly no simple recipes but looking at the experiences of others can be of benefit. Deal and Kennedy's comprehensive study of large corporations who were in the process of cultural change provided helpful findings.

The first lesson which surprised Deal and Kennedy (1982), was that most chief executives underestimated the **time** it takes to achieve real and lasting change in an organization. It's certainly possible to spend less time and have the trappings of change; reshuffling papers, new organizational charts, physical reorganization of people and offices, etc. but these are not cultural changes.

> Once it becomes apparent that change is necessary, you must realize that there are two other tough facts to face: change is time-consuming and expensive...The conclusions were startling even to us. To achieve even half of the change a company attempts, it must spend an amount equivalent to between 5 and 10 percent of its annual budget (p. 161).

That means about 5-10 % of time, too. Deal and Kennedy offer other considerations regarding change:

1. The argument that the leader advances for change must be credible, otherwise he/she will never convince anyone.
2. Many change efforts fail simply because not enough was invested in them--time, energy and EFFORT.
3. The leader must be thoughtful (as well as economical) in deciding which cultural problems to attack and which to walk away from.
4. Don't underestimate the time. It literally takes years to achieve fundamental change in an organization's culture. Be patient.
5. Recognize that peer group consensus will be the major influence on acceptance or willingness to change.
6. Convey and emphasize two-way trust in all matters (especially communication) related to change.
7. Think of change as skill-building and concentrate on training as part of the change process.
8. Encourage people to adapt the basic idea for the change to fit the real world around them...hang loose and be flexible.
9. Find hundreds of ways of communicating core values throughout the process (p. 162-169).

Culture tends to be a conservative, stabilizing force for any social system (Wilson, 1982). Much cultural content has a deep sense of obligation attached to it. People act and think in certain ways because they think it is the right thing to do. As Deal and Kennedy (1982) point out:

> Change always threatens a culture. People form strong attachments to heroes, legends, the rituals of daily life, the hoopla of extravaganzas and ceremonies--all the symbol and settings of the work place. Change strips down these relationships and leaves employees confused, insecure, and often angry....Because of these cultural barriers to change, EFFECTING REAL AND LASTING CHANGE IS TIME-CONSUMING, COSTLY, DIFFICULT, AND RISKY (p. 157).

However, to attempt anything short of cultural change is to continue with the episodic change initiatives that have wrought so little lasting progress for America's schools. Without this internal restructuring, we will fall short of creating for our nation the kind of educational system that it MUST have in order to be economically sound and to continue nourishing democratic ideals.

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NARRATIVE 4

CREATING AND COMMUNICATING A MISSION FOR CHANGE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Creating and Communicating a Mission for Schools

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Narrative 4

Creating and Communicating a Mission for Schools

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Participants will learn the necessity for having a clear mission focused on teaching for learning for all and will describe the processes for development and institutionalization of the mission statement.

Objectives:

(1) To understand a historical perspective on beliefs about learning and their implications for a new kind of mission for schools.

(2) To relate the research findings from the private sector to the need for a clear and focused mission in schools.

(3) To relate the premises of Effective Schools Research to the critical attributes of a school mission.

(4) To identify the processes for developing the school and district mission.

(5) To describe district and school behaviors, policies and procedures inconsistent with a "teaching for learning" mission (grouping, tracking, etc.).

Introduction

As complex organizations, the importance of schools and school districts having a clear and focused mission cannot be overemphasized. Mission is the cement that holds the components of a school together. It is the driving force that propels a school toward effectiveness. Basically, school effectiveness practitioners advocate a clear and focused mission statement that describes explicitly the expectations that the school has for student achievement. Although it can and should be stated in many different ways, in essence it must affirm that all children in a school are capable of achieving mastery in all intended areas of the curriculum and that the teaching staff accepts responsibility for accomplishing this.

As participants proceed through this discussion, five questions will be addressed. They are:

1. How do beliefs about learning affect a school and/or school district mission?
2. How does research from the private sector support the need for a clear and focused mission?
3. How do key propositions derived from Effective Schools Research relate to the mission statement?
4. What factors impact development and communication of the mission statement?
5. How can the mission statement be operationalized in school and district policies and procedures?

What are the Historical Beliefs about Learning that Impact the Mission of Schools?

As schools and school districts begin the development of a mission statement, it is helpful to understand how current results in public education have been shaped by both our *beliefs* about student learning and by the *economic and social demands* of society at large. Much of how we currently operate schools is reflective of both an outdated knowledge base on the nature of student learning and of an industrial society that had economically profitable jobs for large portions of an uneducated population. As the many commissions and national reports condemned America's educational system, few failed to note that for decades we did exactly the job that society demanded--sorting and selecting youngsters for various roles in society and the work force. The issue facing schools now is how to restructure the system to meet the demands of the information age where **all** must be well educated.

As we examine the history of education in America, we see that our beliefs and expectations about the nature of the learner and the learning process passed through three distinct stages or eras. In Era I, we expected a little learning from many students. In Era II, we expected much learning from some students. But today, in Era III, we must expect much learning from all students. Reviewing each of these eras is important to our understanding of where we were so we can better determine where we must be in the future. This work is particularly helpful as one begins the process of developing the mission statement of the school and school system. It should be noted that a significant portion of this section is derived from a paper by Glen E. Robinson (1986), entitled "Learning Expectancy: A Force Changing Education." The reader is encouraged to examine the article in its entirety.

Era I -- Little Learning from Many

Era I of America's educational system extended from about 1837 to 1909 and was characterized by the expectation of "a little learning from many students." The Era began with the appointment of Horace Mann as the first executive secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, the first state board of public instruction in the nation. This critical event in the history of popular education firmly planted the common school as an indispensable institution in American society.

The curriculum in early American educational history was centered around discipline and learning the three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic. It was believed that pupils who had the will to learn would learn, and those who did not learn were certainly laggards. This new educational system was shaped by a personal experience of Horace Mann. In 1837, Mann witnessed a senseless riot in the streets of Boston that resulted in massive looting and injury to many people. Thus, he found himself in agreement with those who viewed the common people as a threat to the harmony of society and who must be controlled and restrained. He saw this control coming not by force or power--that was not the American way--but by education.

The basis for the learning concept that children must be disciplined and taught the three R's was rooted in the traditions and religious beliefs of the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The "Old Deluder Satan Act" of 1647 mandated the establishment of the first public schools in the nation. With some modification, tradition and religion remained the basis of learning in the common schools throughout the 19th century. Learning was assessed mainly by pupil recitation, rote memorization and demonstration. Typically, the teacher called the pupil or group of pupils to the teacher's desk to recite the lesson or to demonstrate skill in performing the assigned task.

Thus, in Era I, **a little learning was expected from many pupils**. Almost all pupils were expected to learn the three R's. Pupils were expected to learn to behave and respect authority. The emphasis in Era I was on literacy, social control, and values vital to a young and fledgling republic. America, largely an agrarian nation, had little need or desire for highly educated masses. (For a more complete discussion on early American educational history, see David Tyack's One Best System, 1974.)

Era II -- Much Learning from Some Students

During Era II, which extended from about 1910 to 1975, much learning was expected from some students, but little learning was expected from other students. Throughout much of this Era, little learning was expected not only from many individual students, but also from whole groups of minority or handicapped children and those with economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The learning concept in this Era was that pupils differed in their capacity to learn. Some pupils had much learning capacity and were good learners; others had little capacity and were poor learners. The capacity of students to learn was considered fixed, with little if any possibility for change in the amount of learning that could be expected from poor learners.

The research base for this learning concept came from early studies of intelligence that equated aptitude with capacity to learn and showed aptitude to be distributed as a "normal curve." This Era's approximate beginning date, 1910, is attributed to the initiation of the educational and intelligence testing movement in American education.

In 1904, the French government had commissioned French psychologist Alfred Binet to develop a measuring instrument that would detect "dull" children who would not profit from conventional schooling. Binet, in collaboration with a colleague, completed the Binet-Simon Scale of intelligence in 1905, and revised it in 1908 and in 1911.

Binet's work attracted much attention in the United States. Professor Lewis Terman at Stanford University became keenly interested in the Binet intelligence tests. He renormed the tests on a group of California children, and in 1916 published the Stanford-Binet scale to measure the intelligence of American children. These new instruments for measuring human intelligence created great excitement in the educational and psychological communities at the time, but they had a major disadvantage--they were individual tests that required 90 minutes to administer. Later, in 1918, the first group intelligence test appeared. The Otis General Intelligence Scale was designed by Arthur Otis for use with secondary school students. For elementary pupils, the Delta I and Delta II by Haggerty appeared in 1919. The element common to all these intelligence tests and the early studies of intelligence was that they equated aptitude with the capacity to learn and showed aptitude to be normally distributed. Since the capacity to learn was believed not only to be normally distributed but also unchangeable, it followed that measures of student learning should also be normalized and standardized, to rank learners from good to poor. As a result, educational measurement spread rapidly throughout American education and soon became widely accepted.

However, it is important to realize that the standardized tests in Era II were designed to *cause* a certain portion of students to fail. Standardized tests were constructed to have an equal number of students fail as excel. The concept that a third of the students would learn a lot and a third would learn a little was the basic operating principle of education during Era II. We expected much learning from some, but little learning from others.

The educational emphasis during Era II was on providing the opportunity to learn. The lack of learning by all students was generally deplored but accepted. The role of the learner in Era II was to listen, study, take a test, and receive a grade. Once given the opportunity to learn, it was the *students'* responsibility to take advantage of the opportunity by applying themselves. The amount of each student's accomplishment was graded periodically and reported to the student and parents.

During this Era, student grades were arbitrarily curved and normally distributed to sort and label learners as good, fair, or poor, even if the differences were sometimes trivial. It became customary to divide learners into five groups and to label them A through F, regardless of the amount of learning or lack of it that took place.

Educators had discovered the normal curve in grading pupil accomplishment and had come to believe it was infallible. It was imprinted on teachers in their training and urged upon them by their supervisors. If teachers gave too many A's, they were called to task for grading "too easy"; if they had too many F's, they were grading "too hard." If a teacher gave a test and too many in the class scored high, the grades were curved up; if too many made low scores, the grades were curved down. The concept that grades must be normally distributed, no matter what, was firmly fixed in the thinking and behavior of a vast majority of educators.

But low learning expectancy in this Era was not confined to the normal distribution of test scores and students' grades within a teacher's classroom. Low learning was also expected from whole groups of children and youth. There were many persons who held lower learning expectancies for black students than for white; lower for Hispanics than Anglos; lower for children with disabilities than for other children; lower for children from poor families than from affluent families; lower in mathematics for girls than for boys; lower in reading for boys than for girls.

The broader demands of society at that time were consistent with these educational outcomes of the schools. America was the leading industrial nation of the world. It required a few highly educated individuals at the top, a skilled middle management, and many on the shop floor who needed little if any education. Jobs were plentiful and most could find a place to strive for the American dream.

Era III -- Much Learning from All

Era III began about 1976 when we began to see both the educational research base and the economic need to expect much learning from all students. The learning concept in this new Era is that all pupils can learn given sufficient time and appropriate conditions. This concept leads us to think of learners as fast and slow--not good and poor. The research base for the concept comes from studies showing that aptitude predicts the rate of learning--not the level or complexity of learning.

We can date the beginning of this Era about 1976, the year that Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago published his book on mastery learning, titled Human Characteristics and School Learning. This book has been acclaimed by some as one of the most important educational works of the 20th century. It brought widespread attention to the concept that all children could be expected to learn and that they would learn given sufficient time and appropriate conditions.

Bloom and others give credit for the concept to John Carroll of Harvard University, who in 1963 published "A Model of School Learning" in Teachers College

Record. In this article Professor Carroll set forth and defended the concept that differences in student scores on aptitude and intelligence tests are measures of the time that is required for different students to learn the same material--not, as previously believed, measures of student's innate capacities to learn.

This concept that aptitude predicts the rate of learning and not the capacity for learning immediately caught the interest of a few investigators. It was a decade, however, before the concept was sufficiently tested and disseminated for wide use in public schools. The foundation of such current instructional approaches as Learning for Mastery, Competency-Based Education, and Outcome-Based Instruction can be traced to the basic concept of Carroll that was validated and popularized by Bloom in 1976. This was also the period in which much of the research related to effective schools was being conducted and consolidated. The results of the Effective Schools Research support the tenet that all students can learn and that they will learn given sufficient time and proper instruction.

The concept that all children can and will learn requires a new and different approach to the assessment and measurement of student achievement. With this concept, tests can no longer be designed and normally curved to rank learners arbitrarily from good to poor. The concept requires objective-referenced, diagnostic, and content mastery tests designed to measure and monitor student progress toward specific learning outcomes. Such tests are designed not to show how students compare with each other, but to answer the question: "How is this student progressing toward his or her learning objectives?"

In Era III, great emphasis is on the expectation that all students can learn. No longer can a school be excused for not being effective merely because a large proportion of its students are from either minority and/or lower socioeconomic families. There are ample documented cases from the school effectiveness literature where such schools and school districts have been turned around--and in a relatively short time.

Moreover, research supports the belief that nearly all students can be expected to learn at satisfactory levels given sufficient time and appropriate conditions. The emphasis is no longer on merely providing pupils the *opportunity* to learn; the emphasis now is on the *obligation* to teach them.

The role of the teacher in this new Era is that of an *educational analyst* and *facilitator*, assisting all pupils to achieve learning objectives. The teacher is expected to teach, test, analyze, and reteach until all pupils attain mastery.

The role of the learner is to study, participate, take tests, and restudy until learning objectives are attained. All students are expected to learn and to continue diligently with the teaching-learning process until they have achieved their specific learning objectives. In this Era, the progress and achievement of each learner is the central focus of the school and its resources.

Learners are evaluated on the degree to which they attain their learning objectives. The old assumption--that student grades must be arbitrarily curved so that only a small proportion of pupils receive high grades, indicating much learning, and that an equal number of pupils receive low grades indicating less learning at the testing time--no longer applies. As each student achieves his or her learning objectives, the achievement is appropriately recognized.

The evaluation and testing process should be redesigned to assess and monitor the progress of individual students toward their learning objectives, and not just to compare or rank them with their classmates or some norm group.

The best graphic portrayal of the comparison of Era II with Era III comes in comparing the bell or normal curve with the "J" curve.[1] If schools see themselves as

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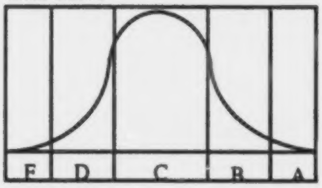
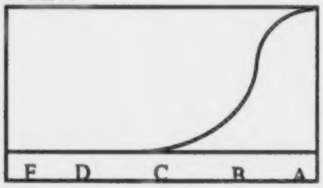
[1] J-Curve: A mathematical expression of achievement that illustrates that "most kids can learn most things, most of the time" unlike the traditional bell shaped curve which shows gradations of student achievement including failure as "normal and acceptable."

Bell Curve



J-Curve



"sorting and selecting" organizations that provide all students with virtually the same time to learn and same instructional strategies then inevitably the bell curve will result. However, if schools see themselves as committed teaching organizations, then altering time and instructional strategies can result in virtually all students reaching a mastery level.

How does Research from the Private Sector Support the Need for a Clear and Focused Mission?

Effective organizations, whether they are schools or businesses, have a clear sense of what they are about--what their mission is. A clear and focused mission is the framework around which an effective organization is developed. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, writing in their book Leaders (1985) stated:

> If there is a spark of genius in the leadership function at all it must be in this transcending ability, a kind of magic, to assemble--out of all the variety of images, signals, forecasts and alternatives--a clearly articulated vision of the future that is at once single, easily understood, clearly desirable, and energizing (p. 103).

Thus, the first--and perhaps the most important--step in school improvement (or district improvement) is describing the organization you seek to become. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1985) observe in Reinventing the Corporation that the first ingredient in establishing an outstanding company is a "powerful vision, a whole new sense of where a company is going and how to get there" (p. 24).

A mission should hold forth promise that things can be better--a belief that the status quo is unacceptable. Bennis and Nanus (1985) explain that a vision of an organization "articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists. A vision is a target that beckons" (p. 89).

What can schools and school districts learn from these observations about the world of business? There are obvious and important differences between the worlds of business and education. The education of children is far more complex than making a product.

Nevertheless, there is much to be learned from America's best run companies and perhaps the most important message is that if you don't know where you are going, you probably won't get anywhere.

Many benefits accrue when the school or school district articulates a clear and focused mission. First, a clear mission is motivational. A mission statement is a formal, public declaration of what is believed to be important, a statement of those things in which we believe deeply. A heightened awareness of the school or school district's mission provides a focal point around which people can rally. As Aburdene and Naisbitt (1985) said, "When people have a vision they are motivated to make it a reality" (p. 27). In his study of peak performers, Charles Garfield (1986) noted that one characteristic always present with these achievers is a vision that fuels their motivation. A clear and focused mission is motivational in that it provides a purpose for what we do.

Second, a clear mission is important to provide direction within the organization. When people read, discuss and reach consensus about the mission of their school, clear images or guidelines for their own conduct begin to emerge. Bennis and Nanus (1985) remind us that if an organization has a clear sense of purpose, direction and ideal future state, its members are able to find and understand their roles within that organization.

Additionally, a mission statement becomes an agenda for action. The mission statement becomes the benchwork against which our behavior is evaluated. Once we have a clear and focused mission statement it will be much easier to figure out how to get from point A to point B.

Of course, a mission statement that describes those beliefs about schooling should also provide the basis for evaluating our policies, practices and general climate within the organization. The mission statement provides a basis for identifying discrepancies between future direction and current practice.

The research from the private sector not only tells us that a clear and focused mission is crucial, it also conveys the importance of consensus. Bennis and Nanus (1985) insist that "if an organization is to be successful, it must be guided by a vision that has grown from the needs of the entire organization and is claimed or owned by all important actors" (p. 105). Eaker and Dufour note in Fulfilling the Promise of Excellence (1987) that the ultimate value of a school's vision of excellence depends not on its format but on whether it elicits feelings of ownership and endorsement from the various groups in the school district. They state that "if teachers, administrators, and parents are genuinely committed to achieving an excellent school, they must play an important part in reaching a consensus about the school they seek to become" (p. 14).

How do Key Propositions From Effective Schools Research Relate to a School's Mission?

One of the contemporary advocates of school improvement, Theodore Sizer, speculates that in order for American schools to improve, there are three things which must be actively present: focus, focus, focus!

In using the Effective Schools framework for school improvement, two critical questions must be answered when the staff is engaged in development of its mission:

1. "What do we want our students to know and be able to do when they complete their K-12 schooling?" (i.e., effective at what?)
2. "How many students do we expect to learn what it is that we want them to know and to be able to do?" (i.e., effective for whom?)

The most straightforward answers to these questions ought to be embraced in the school's mission statement and reflected in its concomitant curricular goals and priorities.

The evolution of the Effective Schools Research has developed from a set of propositions that are strong in their simplicity. If your school does not now have a clear and focused school mission, and if your faculty can accept these four basic propositions as both reasonable and possible, then it may be appropriate to institute a course of action directed toward school improvement based upon Effective Schools Research. Propositions around which the mission may be developed are as follows:

- Proposition I: The primary goal of public education is to empower students with choices.
- Proposition II: The primary function of schools is teaching and learning.
- Proposition III: The primary evidence for establishing the effectiveness of a school is to be found in its student outcomes.
- Proposition IV: In the final analysis, the effective school is a school that is successful in teaching all of its students the essential skills they need to know or to be able to do.

Proposition I

The primary goal of public education is to empower students with choices. Many years ago, a distinguished educator/scholar, Ralph Tyler (1949) said that you know you are being educated when you have more choices now than you had previously. The concept of Proposition I is that the goal of K-12 schooling is to give as many students as possible as many options as possible for choosing what they might do after the twelfth grade. To assure that this goal is fully operational, we need to ask, "What is it that students need to know and be able to do by the end of grade twelve, to obtain the maximum number of life choices possible?"

Proposition II

The primary function of schools is teaching and learning. Empowerment of students to have many career choices derives from the school's program of curriculum and instruction. Generally, educators agree in spirit with this premise, but then must acknowledge that a number of our current organizational and institutional patterns and practices prevent our successfully teaching all students. It becomes vital to identify and question any practices or institutional traditions which do not contribute to teaching and learning for all. Then, focusing on those elements which do enhance teaching and learning, the local school staff must make an uncompromising recommitment to the goal of teaching all students.

Proposition III

The primary evidence for establishing the effectiveness of a school is to be found in its student outcomes. The current and continuing national and community-level press for accountability has convinced most educators that it is essential to provide solid evidence which verifies that students, in fact, are learning the intended curriculum. Such evidence is frequently non-existent or sparse.

The mission and curricular priorities of the school are usually communicated to students and faculty through descriptions of curricular goals and grade-level or class objectives. While such efforts should be encouraged, a more powerful and strategic method for stating the mission is by making crystal clear which outcomes students are expected to master. Community members will not be satisfied with less than factual evidence that their young people are learning what it is that we believe students ought to learn.

Proposition IV

The effective school is a school that is successful in teaching all of its students the essential skills they need to know or to be able to do. The focus of each effective school is upon quality and equity. The school should be constantly concerned that all of the major subsets of the student population are profiting from the offerings of the instructional program. Implied in this proposition is a strong message: the outcome indicators selected to demonstrate student achievement should reflect with accuracy the curriculum being taught. In addition, the outcome results should be examined in such a way that educators can be certain that no major subset of the student population is left behind. This requires that the school develop an instructional management system which provides useful and frequent feedback on the extent to which all students have learned the essential curriculum.

These four propositions provide a framework by which the local school board can begin to clarify its school mission and curricular priorities. Actually, the premises permit a great deal of latitude for local policy makers.

As readers reflect upon the propositions, they will notice that no suggestions were imposed about what "ought" to be taught. The local board of education, operating in the context of its state's educational goals, is responsible for selecting the specific instructional goals, approaches, and curricular content. The four propositions, emanating from the Effective Schools Research, help to address the issue of how a school may begin to set and articulate its own mission priority.

What Factors Impact Development and Communication of the School Mission Statement?

The first key to success in propelling a district toward a central mission may well lie in the process used in its development. Since this is probably one of the first "effective schools" activities that touch staff throughout the district, it will likely "set the stage" and convey values and beliefs about future school improvement activities.

When the district and school staff work together to develop a mission statement, some healthy "creative tension" evolves within the group. For the first time, deeply-held beliefs about children and learning emerge and are challenged. Statements from teachers that have been accepted with a knowing smile suddenly prove to be unpopular. Even thinly-disguised attitudes and prejudices about poor and minority children can not be concealed. In other words, the complacency of the school's norms and culture are challenged. All involved should realize that this cathartic conflict is both necessary and helpful. Individuals must realize that they may at times have to sacrifice personal autonomy for the good of the children and the entire school. Furthermore, there is the potential within every school to accomplish this task.

It is important that thorough discussion of the Effective Schools Research take place prior to the drafting of a mission statement. As plans and activities are designed, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal is to arrive at a description of an excellent school--one that teachers, parents, students and community members will endorse. A sense of ownership in the mission statement by various groups is necessary if the mission statement is to have any real impact.

After discussion and information gathering, using a variety of methodologies such as surveys and interviews, a tentative composite draft of a mission statement should be written by the district planning team. Various groups are then asked to provide feedback on the draft.

After responses from various individuals and groups regarding the initial draft are discussed, the mission statement should be revised. This process should be repeated until consensus is reached.

Once adopted, the mission statement will also provide a foundation for evaluating the success of schools. In other words, a school should be evaluated on how well it accomplishes its mission. Of course the mission statement has strong implications for curriculum, methods of instruction, scheduling, tracking and testing which will be discussed later.

There is **no one right way** to structure a mission statement. While several suggestions are offered about the attributes of a mission statement, it must reflect district procedures that will be accepted by the school community.

A mission statement is a succinct statement of belief about the staff's commitment to educate all students in the district. The critical attributes of a district mission statement answer these questions, as illustrated in the following example from Fisher School in Marquette, Michigan.

1. Who will benefit?
2. What is the nature of the service?
3. Who will deliver the services?
4. What constitutes observable evidence?
5. What is the level of accountability for equity?

Fisher School Mission Statement

The staff of Fisher School believes that ALL students can learn and can achieve mastery of basic grade-level skills, regardless of their previous academic performance, family background, socioeconomic status, race or gender. We believe that our school's purpose is to educate all students to high levels of academic performance, while fostering positive growth in social/ emotional behaviors and attitudes. We accept the responsibility to teach all students so that they can attain their maximum educational potential.

Critical Attributes of School Mission

1. Who will benefit?

   "ALL students"

2. What is the nature of the service?

   "purpose is to educate"

3. Who will deliver service?

   "staff of Fisher School"

4. What constitutes observable evidence?

   "high levels of academic performance"

   "positive growth in social/emotional behaviors and attitudes"

5. What is the level of accountability for equity?

   "we accept responsibility to teach all students"

How is a Mission Statement Operationalized within a School District?

Leadership is required in following through with any mission statement. The leader not only provides enthusiasm, but also must provide stability when ideas or plans are made which are not consistent with the mission of the organization. This person is also responsible for communicating the mission in such a way that it permeates all the support services of the organization. The leader must clearly identify with the mission and consistently move toward it.

It is one of the leader's top responsibilities to live and breathe the mission of the organization. As this is exhibited and explored sincerely, staff members will begin to explore and adopt the mission as their own.

What are the results of a consistent and promoted mission statement?

1. A mission statement will provide an identity and a unity for persons participating in the school district organization as a whole. One of the most significant strategies to get people to work together is to help them see and develop common goals. Once they understand and ascribe to a mission on which they agree, a sense of ownership is created and direction can be set.
2. A solid mission statement provides a basis from which decisions and testing measurements may evolve.
3. A mission statement provides a basis for more unified planning and goal-setting, which is the crux of the organization's future success.
4. For one employee, a mission statement may provide the needed security to make a difficult decision. The same mission statement can allow another employee to be a creative risk-taker in planning if the new idea carries forth the organization's mission.

A helpful and clear mission statement must be specific and defined. It must be inspirational while remaining direct and simple for all to understand. The very best mission statements have the ability to encourage openness and growth while bringing a variety of persons together for a common purpose.

The mission statement can be translated to commitment within the organization in a variety of ways:

1. Develop an awareness that a mission exists.
2. Involve others in discussion of what the statement means and requires.
3. Be sure the mission is communicated in writing to all within the organization.

4. Provide repeated and intermittent reinforcement of behaviors which are consistent with the mission statement.
5. Release the power of the people to perpetuate the mission.

The power and emotion in a mission statement, or more accurately, in the people that believe in and pursue a mission, is exciting. Persons grasping a purpose or a mission for which they can live and work often become more creative, more flexible, more sensitive, and harder working.

Summary

School improvement is on the national agenda in this era of change in education. In The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture, Deal and Peterson (1990) wrote: "[Schools] must look inside themselves to realize the potential embedded in their history and values." From the history, the culture and the shared goals and commitments to the school, staff and administrators can come together to create and effectively communicate and practice a mission for improvement and for teaching and learning for all students.

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NARRATIVE 5

THE DISTRICT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

THE DISTRICT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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Initial work on this narrative was begun under the direction of Larry Lezotte, Barbara Taylor and Lydia McCue, while the Center for Effective Schools was located at Okemos, Michigan. Additional writing, editing and compiling was completed by Edie Holcomb, Associate Director, National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kent D. Peterson, Director.

Narrative 5

The District Role in Support of School Improvement

Goals and Objectives

Goals:

(1) Participants will understand the organizational structures and processes necessary at the district-level to initiate and support improvement based on Effective Schools Research.

(2) Participants will describe processes for developing district guidelines to support building-based school improvement efforts.

Objectives:

(1) To clarify the roles and relationships of districts and individual schools in school improvement efforts.

(2) To identify the congruence between district guidelines and school improvement plans developed in individual buildings.

(3) To describe readiness activities prior to district-level initiation of an Effective Schools program.

(4) To describe the selection, roles and responsibilities of the district-level school improvement steering committee.

(5) To identify the content and process of developing district-level guidelines for school improvement at the building level.

(6) To describe the implications for district office organization and staff when the school becomes the unit for change.

(7) To describe activities for extending and maintaining focus on school improvement over time.

Introduction

Successful and comprehensive change is most often the result of a carefully planned effort focused on the individual school, actively supported by the district, and collaboratively planned and implemented by the teachers and the other staff within the school. This narrative will focus exclusively on one of those factors: the supportive role of the district in initiating and facilitating building-level plans and activities based on the Effective Schools Research. It will deal with those activities and guidelines that are general in nature and apply consistently to all schools within the district. The planning which takes place at the individual school is described in Narrative 6--Implementing School Improvement at the Building Level. Skills and processes needed for collaboration are described in Training Session 5--Improving Schools through Teamwork.

This narrative will further be limited to district activities and guidelines that apply specifically to school improvement efforts. It is certainly true that other issues such as curriculum development and alignment, alternative forms of more authentic assessment including criterion-referenced tests and portfolios, and personnel evaluation may surface as administrators and teachers examine student outcomes. District administrators and curriculum specialists must be willing to respond to such questions when they arise. However, curriculum development and personnel evaluation are considered to be ongoing parallel processes conducted by personnel and curriculum staff, not integral steps in the school improvement sequence. The scope of this training program does not allow detailed discussion of those topics.

Terminology for this paper has been carefully selected to reinforce the roles of the district and individual schools. The group formed at the **district-level** is referred to as a steering committee to illustrate its primary purpose of providing general direction. Decisions made at the district-level are referred to as policies when they are mandatory, and as guidelines when they provide a framework within which individual schools function as semi-autonomous units. **Building-level** groups are referred to as school improvement teams to emphasize their collaborative efforts and affirm their importance in the planning and implementation of specific change efforts.

What Are the Appropriate Roles and Responsibilities of the District and Individual Schools in the School Improvement Process?

The question of division of responsibilities between the district and individual buildings is a complex one that has emerged over time. Because the original Effective Schools Research was conducted at individual sites, school improvement was described as occurring "one school at a time" (Marburger, 1985). An unfortunate result was that sincere, motivated principals and teachers moved forward to increase their school's effectiveness without the support or involvement of district-level administrators. The early steps of mission-writing and team formation were possible independently, but once goals were identified and resources to address them were sought, district administrators had to be involved. Too often, they were unable or unwilling to provide funds for projects not included in the budget process. Highly centralized districts sometimes regarded these individual school efforts as contrary to their desire for uniformity of curriculum and instructional programs. Some were even apprehensive of such a site-based initiative. As a result, school improvement teams were unable to implement the results of their hard work in the planning stages.

In order to avoid such discouraging experiences, external consultants and change facilitators began to stress the need for intensive district-level involvement from the outset. However, this was also carried too far in some cases, resulting in extensive, complicated district-level mandates which left little room for flexibility and authentic decision-making by staff members in their own schools.

A proper balance between these two extremes is essential. Large districts are so complex that central office staff are perceived as being "far from the trenches" and their decisions are received as "top-down mandates." On the other hand, changes initiated by individual teachers or groups of teachers have limited impact on the organization, leave the cultural context of the district virtually unchanged, and fail to address district-wide issues that need resolution before their efforts can be successful.

The current approach to the problem of balance between district and individual school roles and responsibilities is based on the same concept as the "balance of powers" described in the United States Constitution. Our federal government is given "expressed power" for responsibilities that can only be done at the national level, such as minting a common currency and providing for the common defense. Other functions are "reserved" to the states to protect their rights and avoid excessive federalism. Using the same terminology, the school district must take responsibility for those activities that are needed to support all schools, and which can apply to all schools. These would be their "expressed powers". All other decision-making and activities should be "reserved" for the collaborative involvement of stakeholders at the individual sites. The concept of the individual school as the unit of change and improvement is delineated in the school improvement program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory:

> - Schools are where the mission is actually achieved. In schools, teachers teach and students learn. All others should expect schools to achieve the mission and support them in doing so.
> - Schools serve students and communities that differ from one another. Student learning needs and community expectations vary by community.
> - School staff members have personal beliefs, values, knowledge, skills, interests and concerns. This makes each school unique.
> - Priorities vary among schools based on the local school situation.
>
> Direction setting efforts must provide the basis for diverse groups and individuals to work toward achievement of the district mission. Direction setting statements must be general and include important, commonly held values and beliefs. Statements should provide firm direction, but allow a good deal of discretion to units within the district to decide how they will work toward achievement of the district mission. Direction setting must require units to take responsibility for the outcomes to be attained by the district.

The next three sections will define activities which many districts have found helpful in the readiness stage; outline the type of guidelines needed to provide direction but allow variation; and identify the activities which should be reserved for autonomous effort at the building level.

What Activities are Essential to be Done by the District in Support of School Improvement?

Practitioners working with school improvement on a daily basis were asked for input on these three issues based on their experiences with schools and districts. When asked about essential district activities, the factor most frequently mentioned as crucial for successful school improvement efforts was the **commitment of the superintendent**. The superintendent and members of the Board of Education must become knowledgeable about the Effective Schools Research and process, and be able to respond to questions from the public in a positive, supportive way.

These experienced educators charged the superintendent with initiating school improvement by involving others in initial training and consideration of whether school improvement should be undertaken as a district endeavor. He/she was described as the key figure in developing commitment from the many groups who will be affected by any change effort in the schools.

It is also important to include the **teachers' union president or representative** in these early discussions. "If teacher unions ... actively and vigorously oppose a project, they have the power to seriously impede or stop it. If a union actively and vigorously favors a project, then fundamental school reform will be greatly facilitated" (Purkey & Smith, 1985, p. 371-374).

Early questions to be addressed at the district level relate to the readiness and resources of the district to undertake school improvement. As chief executive officer of the district, the superintendent is the person most able to influence the budget process to provide the financial **resources** needed for school improvement. Once a collaborative decision to move forward is made, the informal group of stakeholders with whom the superintendent has been consulting is replaced by a **district-level steering committee**.

The superintendent should be a visible member of this group, communicating support for their efforts. He/she will bring their recommended **policy statement and guidelines** to the Board of Education for discussion and approval. (See later sections of this narrative for specific information on policy, resources, and the role and composition of the steering committee.)

Practitioners agreed that sustaining a long-term perspective (of at least seven years) was a primary task for the superintendent. Additionally, the superintendent must be willing to confront behaviors which weaken the quality, efficiency and equity of school improvement. The role of the superintendent as a strong, collaborative leader is essential to success implementing school improvement.

Another essential activity which must take place at the district-level is development of a **mission statement**. (Refer to Training session 2 for details.) This statement communicates what the district believes about its primary purposes, and a vision of what it endeavors to provide for its students.

Example: Every student in the ______ School District can enjoy success as a learner and master the curriculum at a high level of competency.

The mission statement is strengthened when it is accompanied by general **student outcome goals**, reflecting what a graduate should be able to do after completion of schooling in this district. These goals must be broad enough to allow individual buildings to develop specific objectives within them to guide their school improvement planning and instructional strategies. The district should not set such specific annual goals that they add to or interfere with those developed at the school level.

Example of general student outcome goal: At least 40 percent of _____ District's seniors will score in the outstanding range on a holistically scored writing sample.

Example of specific school improvement objective: Over the next three years, the percentage of students scoring in the outstanding range on the writing sample will increase by five percent per year.

For school improvement teams to be successful, the district must **redefine the role of central office** administrators and specialists. They must move from the traditional orientation of monitoring and reporting to a genuine service-orientation as facilitators and technical assistants. Existing organizational factors such as hierarchical "chains of command" must be examined and may need to be restructured to enable school improvement teams to function efficiently and receive needed support.

The district must assume responsibility for much of the **external communication** which makes community members aware of this change effort, the rationale behind it, and the results anticipated. District administrators must be verbal and visible in **support of the schools' efforts**, encouraging empowerment of school level leadership, rewarding school level risk-taking, and allowing freedom to experiment and fail. Reviewing school improvement plans and progress reports is an important part of coordinating the overall school improvement program, but must be done in ways that do not inhibit teams from setting ambitious goals and trying innovative solutions to problems.

Essential activities of the district include:

1. Developing knowledge and commitment;
2. Allocating resources;
3. Forming a district-level steering committee;
4. Drafting policy and guidelines for the school improvement process;
5. Developing a mission statement and general student outcome goals;

6. Redefining central office roles;
7. Communicating with the public;
8. Reviewing school improvement plans and progress reports; and
9. Providing visible support for school efforts.

Development of policy and guidelines by the district illustrates a strong commitment to improve schools and demonstrates the initiative, responsibility and accountability to the public to carry out school improvement.

What Guidelines Should be Developed at the District Level to Assist Building-Level School Improvement Teams?

The success of school improvement teams relies heavily upon allocation of resources and the communication of high expectations from the district level. The **policy statement, mission and general student outcome goals** are presented to the schools and the public as the parameters within which everyone in the district works. They are the "givens" or mandates. For example, a mission statement that all students can learn and will be taught sets an expectation for individual schools and all staff members.

In addition to these requirements, school improvement teams need **guidelines or recommendations** for building level efforts. Without them, building-level teams may not know where to start. With them, building-level teams need the opportunity to adjust and modify to fit their school situation.

Guidelines for building-level school improvement should contain:

1. Identification of resources the district allocates for planning time, training, materials, etc.;
2. Procedures for forming the school improvement team;
3. The general steps to follow in the school improvement process;
4. Forms/formats for school improvement objectives, action plans and progress reports;
5. Sequence and timeline of accomplishments expected;

6. Emphasis on congruence between district mission and goals and school objectives; and
7. Identification of statutory regulations, accreditation standards and/or curriculum priorities (e.g., ___ minutes for reading) that must be observed.

What School Improvement Activities Should be Done at the Building Level?

One of the district-level activities described as essential by associates of NCESRD was identification of a broad mission statement and general student outcome goals. These represent the desired "ends", or final results, of schooling in the district. The "means" to these "ends," decisions about **how** to achieve them, rest in the hands of individual schools through their school improvement teams.

While guidelines may include a number of recommendations about the **composition of the school improvement team**, one essential consideration is that the principal be a participant. Each school will form its own team, and decide **where and when to meet**. Schools are unique entities, and representation of formal and informal leaders and representative groups within the building may require variation from the suggested team composition suggested in Narrative 6.

The school improvement team should involve all staff in reviewing and affirming the district mission statement, and may add **specific belief statements** that are relevant to the student population or the concerns of staff at this school. In other words, all schools must share the basic beliefs of the district, but may have other and/or more specific concerns they wish to express and address. This should be permitted as long as there is no direct conflict with the mission of the district.

While the district has responsibility to gather and analyze data about student performance in the district as a whole (see Narrative 7), it is the responsibility of the school improvement team in each building to **analyze and interpret data** about their students and their school characteristics (correlates). The district should provide technical assistance and make archival data and databases available, but should not become preoccupied with comparing schools and delivering conclusions about their effectiveness. Teachers are much more willing to acknowledge areas that need improvement when they do the analysis, than when they are sent a report with their weaknesses highlighted and compared to other schools.

Specific objectives for improvement should be set at the building level, based on the general goals set by the district and analysis of their own data. (Note: For clarity and consistency, the term "goals" is used for the general student outcome statements formulated at the district level, and the term "objectives" is specifically used for factors to be changed at the school level.) Action plans, the **strategies** adopted for meeting these objectives, are developed by the school improvement team; then communicated, discussed and endorsed by the entire faculty. Responsibility for **implementation, monitoring and reporting** progress also resides with the building-level school improvement team.

The following table may further delineate some district and school roles in the school improvement process:

DISTRICT	SCHOOL
Develops general mission statement.	Affirms mission statement; may add specific beliefs.
Sets general student outcome goals.	Sets specific objectives for improvement; determines strategies for meeting objectives.
Forms steering committee and guidelines for school teams.	Forms team school improvement.
Outlines a process of school improvement planning.	Implements process.
Plans training in school training improvement and data analysis for all teams.	Plans staff development needed to implement action strategies for that building.
Analyzes data for total district population; makes technical assistance and database available to schools.	Analyzes and interprets building-level data to identify objectives.
Reviews plans and progress reports; offers assistan[illegible]	Monitors and reports progress and evaluates results.

What Commitments Must Be Made by the District to Facilitate Building-Based School Improvement Efforts?

For school improvement teams to approach their tasks with confidence, they must be assured that their efforts are valued by their district and community, and that resources are available to provide them with time, training and needed materials. These two commitments--**focus and finances**--must be provided from the district level.

Focus

School improvement coordinators emphasize the importance of statements of support from both the superintendent and the Board of Education. These should not only be verbal statements to constituents and the press, but should be verified by written documents that stress the district's position that improvement is an ongoing expectation of every school and educator. Formal evidence of commitment to school improvement should be communicated in a **policy statement** adopted by the Board, and used as the frontispiece of district guidelines to schools. Some districts refer to this step as negotiating a "charter" for school improvement. Included in this policy statement would be basic tenets of the process, such as focus on student outcomes, use of data, and examination of the equity question by disaggregation. The policy statement should not include specifically prescribed steps or goals as these may vary more often than policy is reviewed. Having the school improvement program addressed in policy symbolizes its importance to the district and its permanence.

An example of a policy statement developed by a school district appears in Appendix A.

Finances

In order for school improvement teams to have time to meet with each other and to be trained, time must be available outside the regular school day or released from teaching duties during the school day. Provision of this time is the most expensive aspect of school improvement. Other expenses may be the costs of outside consultants to provide training, materials, and the technology and technical assistance to complete data analysis. The cost of released time can be projected by estimating the number of individuals anticipated as members of each school improvement team, the number of training sessions and planning meetings expected during the year, and multiplying by the substitute teacher pay rate. One district estimated this as one-half day per month for school improvement team activities. Another scheduled 8 training sessions for the first year, with school improvement team meetings occurring between sessions. A third, more economical option, has been to hold 1-hour meetings throughout the year after school or during planning time without pay, but schedule 2 or 3 half-day meetings for major work and discussions, using substitute teachers.

Stipends for work outside the regular school day may be based on prior practice or existing contract agreements. A common recommendation is 20 hours of summer work during the first year to analyze data gathered during the school year, formulate objectives for improvement, and develop the action plan and strategies. A shortcoming of summer work on school improvement is that the entire staff is not available to be informed and to react.

One associate of the center estimates that an individual building should have $5000 (in 1989 dollars) allocated for initial implementation of school improvement. Another associate in Lansing, Michigan provided $3000 to each elementary building during the first year, (which includes substitute costs for training days) and $2000 each year following (in the late 1980's). Funds allocated for school improvement teams range from $500-$2000. The essential factor is that resources in some amount be provided, demonstrating that the district "puts its money where its mouth is" when it communicates the need for school improvement and talks about progress.

Because financial resources must be included in the budget process in advance of the year they will be used, districts often scrape together enough funding to support the training of the district steering committee the first year. This allows them to develop the policy statements and guidelines that are needed to support school improvement at the building-level, and also provides a year in which to work on the overall district budget, allocating funds for the school level work to begin the second year.

Commitment to focus and allocation of financial resources are both essential. Incentive money offered to schools without a clear expectation for the process in which it should be used may not reap great rewards in school improvement. It may simply "buy things." On the other hand, communicating expectations of a process and outcomes that should be pursued by a school, without providing resources to do so, is to invite failure and resentment. The two must go hand-in-hand.

Who Should Be on the District-Level Steering Committee and How Should Members be Chosen?

Members who serve on the district steering committee must be intensely committed both to school improvement and to the concept of the individual school as the unit of change. If these individuals have a strong interest in effective schools, but see improvement as a top-down process to be micro-managed by the district, they will not be able to allow teams at the building level to function as they must.

It has already been stated that the **superintendent** should be a visible member of the district-level steering committee. His/her presence shows the commitment and support of the district and is highly recommended. However, districts may have other contingencies to consider. Perhaps competing pressures demand too much of the superintendent's time. Or it may be that in a particular time and place, an adversarial situation such as collective bargaining would suggest that the superintendent not be directly involved. In the majority of cases though, the superintendent is encouraged to participate during the initial stages of developing policy and guidelines. If he/she is not a member of the district-level steering committee, then the superintendent should appoint someone who is seen as working closely with and having a high level of trust with the superintendent. This person's communications should be visible, so the group knows that the superintendent is in touch with the process. The group should not be a "rubber stamp" for the superintendent, but it is equally discouraging to spend time formulating policy and guidelines, and then discover that the superintendent cannot endorse them and bring them before the Board.

Because the major efforts of school improvement will occur at the building level, **principals** must be represented. In a small district, this would be all principals. In a larger district, it would include at least one principal from each level. Credibility with the principals' group is often strengthened by allowing them to elect or nominate their representatives to the district steering committee.

It is suggested that **teachers** be represented in a number at least equal to the number of administrators in the group. In small districts, two teachers per building might serve. In larger districts, representatives from the district at large may need to be chosen. When two teachers per building are on the team, one may be chosen by the faculty and one by the principal. Or staff may give input on both individuals. They should be energetic people with good communication skills and the respect of their peers. It is hoped that these committee members will be those considered instructional leaders in their buildings, since that will be their focus. The **union president** or representative should also be on the steering committee to provide awareness of implications of the master agreement.

If the district has a **specialist in research, testing or data analysis**, this individual will have a vital contribution to make as the steering committee looks at district data. He/she will be the logical one to coordinate technical assistance to the school improvement teams when they begin to work with data from their own buildings.

Some districts also include a **Board member**; a representative from the recognized **parent** organization; members of custodial, secretarial and other **support staff**; and **secondary students**. It is important that members of the steering committee be selected or approved by the group they represent.

What are the Major Responsibilities of the District-Level School Improvement Steering Committee?

The steering committee serves in an **advisory** capacity with responsibility for **two-way communication** between its constituents and the group. In general, its functions include development of policy and guidelines, support of implementation of the individual school building plans, and liaison and coordination among the buildings, the administration and the Board of Education.

Written documents that would be developed by the steering committee include:

1. District mission statement;
2. General student outcome goals;
3. Policy statement emphasizing the importance of ongoing improvement;
4. Description of current status of the district in terms of demographics and student performance;
5. Guidelines for school improvement teams;
6. Budget proposals for resources for school improvement; and
7. Procedure for receiving building-level plans and progress reports.

How do the Roles of the District Steering Committee and Central Office Staff Change as Individual Buildings Embark Upon School Improvement?

The **district-level steering committee** is active during the first few months of exploring and initiating a school improvement program within a district. They are busy drafting policy, mission, general student outcome goals, and guidelines for implementation at the building level. Time and energy are also devoted to gathering district data, analyzing it by disaggregation, and working out this technical process so assistance can be provided to school improvement teams when they begin to work with data.

Once policy and guidelines are adopted by the Board, and schools begin to form and train their own school improvement teams, the district-level steering committee must be willing to relinquish its hold and become less active. After the frequent meetings of the early stages, the steering committee reduces its visibility by meeting only three to four times per year. At these meetings, the purpose is to review what is occurring in buildings, communicate efforts underway so that schools know what's being done elsewhere, and receive progress reports. It is most essential at this time that school efforts be recognized and rewarded. It is just as essential that this group continue to provide external communication, informing the public of events taking place and results achieved. One of the best ways to keep the momentum of improvement going is to identify and celebrate small milestones along the road to achievement of goals and objectives.

When building-level school improvement teams begin their work, it is also time for a role change on the part of **central office staff** (consultants, supervisors, etc.) A visible effort must be made to demonstrate a change in orientation from the traditional monitoring and evaluating done by central office to the role of facilitator. Technical assistance should be provided to teams through the central office staff in response to their needs and requests. Central office administrators may attend meetings of school improvement teams at their invitation, as consultants. While some districts require each central office administrator to serve on a building team to show support, this can also be interpreted as oversight or control and will need to be considered carefully within each district setting.

Central office staff should be accepting of the building leadership team's pace, focus and outcomes, realizing that every school is unique in its needs and in the skill level of its staff. They must model the collaborative approach building teams are trying to develop, and consistently exemplify the effective schools beliefs of quality and equity education for all students. District office staff must be secure enough to allow building staff to develop and work through the process of school improvement, always ready to help but not direct. Principals cannot be expected to carry the whole burden of change alone, nor should central office administrators expect other parts of the organization to change if they are not willing to change themselves.

What May be a Feasible Sequence and Timeline for District-Level Activities in Support of Building-Based School Improvement?

Implementation of school improvement in a district must follow an orderly sequence and realistic timeline in order to be successful. Unlike the district which administered a correlates survey to the entire faculty, K-12, on the Friday afternoon before Memorial Day, with no explanation, districts should carefully consider their state of readiness and available resources before initiating school improvement from the district level. The following guide may be useful. Each step is described in detail in the training program.

Exploring the Research and Process

In most cases, an individual or small group become interested in effective schools and school improvement through literature or attendance at a conference. They become initiators, working with the superintendent to explore the research and process and consider whether the district will become involved. They provide others with articles, reports and books on school improvement, and may send key people to conferences where sessions of effective schools will be presented. Their exploratory activities may even involve a 2-3 day awareness conference or institute devoted solely to effective schools and school improvement, inviting teachers and administrators from successful effective schools programs to visit the district, and visiting other districts or schools who have been successful using the Effective Schools process over a period of time.

This informal group also considers the resources and characteristics of the district as factors in readiness to undertake school improvement. Dr. Joan Shoemaker (1990) recommends that the following questions be discussed with an external facilitator:

1. Who are the students and teachers?
   SES
   Ethnicity
   Type of community
   Years of staff experience

2. What data are available for discussion?
   Achievement
   Discipline

Curriculum
Accreditation Self-Studies
Program Evaluation

3. What does the superintendent expect the school to accomplish?

4. What staff development resources are available for individual schools?
   Time
   Money
   Focus

5. What is the principal's perception of school-based decision-making? Is there a decision-making team and process in place?

6. Why does the principal and/or superintendent want the school and/or district to participate in the Effective Schools process?

7. What previous knowledge base and/or training in effective schools and school improvement has been provided or received by staff?

8. What other innovations are either being implemented currently or have been tried, successfully or not, in the past?

Securing District Commitment and Resources

Once **readiness** factors are considered and the decision is made to move ahead, **awareness** sessions are held for building faculties and for key leadership groups at the district level, such as central office staff, the administrative team or council, the curriculum council, and the executive committee of the teachers' union. These are short (1-1 1/2 hour sessions) designed to make the audiences aware of the basic concepts underlying an Effective Schools project. In addition, more people may be sent to conferences for further exposure.

At this point, verbal commitment must be accompanied by **allocation of resources** for district-level activities for the first year and future budget projections are set for school improvement teams.

Forming the District Steering Committee

At this point, the district-level steering committee is formally established and receives 2-3 days of additional training in the background, rationale and content of the Effective Schools Research and process. It is often efficient to form subcommittees to work on policy, mission statement, general student outcome goals, and guidelines, and have them report back to the whole committee after 4-6 weeks.

Affirming Mission and Belief System

It is especially important to involve representatives of all stakeholders in development of the mission statement. See Training Session 2 for details on this process.

Gathering and Analyzing Data

Once belief statements and student outcome goals are articulated, the steering committee must gather and analyze data to compare the present status of the district with the intended vision. This analysis will be done for the district as a whole, but the identification of sources of archival data and the technical process of analysis by disaggregation will be worked out and made available to school improvement teams when they reach this step.

At this time, **school improvement teams** may be forming at the building level and begin receiving additional training in the Effective Schools Research and process to prepare them for their leadership role. They will work with the entire staff in their buildings to review the district mission statement, affirm their commitment by deciding ways in which they will communicate the mission to their populations, and identify specific belief statements that relate to their individual school situation. As the district steering committee completes analysis of district data, building teams may begin to collect data on school characteristics and student outcomes (see Narrative 7) and plan time to analyze data and draft improvement objectives to share with their staffs.

After these steps are completed, the district-level steering committee becomes less active. The central office staff provide technical assistance and support to the school improvement teams as they report their data, identify improvement objectives, select strategies and develop their school improvement plans. The steering committee meets 2-4 times per year to review progress reports, provide feedback, and make recommendations to strengthen the program.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF A BOARD POLICY STATEMENT SUPPORTING BUILDING-BASED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

From School District No. 12, Adams County, Northglenn, CO

Approved by the School Board at the January 19, 1987 meeting:

WHEREAS, School District No. 12 is committed to providing educational opportunities enabling all citizens to achieve their full potential; and

WHEREAS, School District No. 12 strives toward a supportive, safe and healthy environment where people are trusted, differences are acknowledged, and staff, students and parents enjoy the experience of learning; and

WHEREAS, School District No. 12 is outcome-based, moving toward developing broad curriculum objectives reflecting higher level thinking skills, based on whole learnings and interdisciplinary approaches, supported by computer-managed instruction; and

WHEREAS, School District No. 12 believes in site-based renewal and management where schools and other organizational units focus on improvement by addressing their own issues and concerns, involving staff and community in the process; and

WHEREAS, School District No. 12's central office personnel serve as a resource to support school plans, help schools to coordinate and collaborate on solutions; and

WHEREAS, School District No. 12's staff development efforts should assist teachers and administrators to collaborate toward improving instruction through sharing of research, encouraging discussion, inquiry and reflection; Therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Education of School District No. 12 is hereby committed to optimize progress toward and support of the above stated directions of the district.

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NARRATIVE 6

IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AT THE BUILDING LEVEL

National Center for Effective Schools
Research and Development

Implementing School Improvement at the Building Level

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The concepts and outlines for this narrative were originally developed by two writing teams. Content related to organization of the school and roles and responsibilities of the school improvement team was written by three NCESRD Cadre Members: Marie Parker, Claudia Risnes, and Barbara Jacoby. Marie Parker is the Associate Director for Planning and Development with the Arkansas Department of Education. Claudia Risnes serves as School Improvement Coordinator with the Anoka-Hennepin School District in Minnesota. Barbara Jacoby is an independent consultant.

Narrative text related to components of the school improvement plan and the involvement of other staff, students and community members was prepared by NCESRD Cadre Members: Barbara Jacoby, Dr. Patrick Proctor and Bill Rauhauser. Pat Proctor is Superintendent of Windham Public Schools, Williamantic, CT, and Bill Rauhauser is an independent consultant.

Initial work on this narrative was begun under the direction of NCESRD Cadre Members: Larry Lezotte, Barbara Taylor and Lydia McCue while the Center for Effective Schools was located at Okemos, Michigan. Additional writing, editing and compiling was completed by Edie Holcomb, Associate Director, National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kent D. Peterson, Director.

Narrative 6

Implementing School Improvement at the Building Level

Goals and Objectives

Goals:

(1) Participants will be able to describe the processes for developing, implementing and monitoring the school improvement plan.

(2) Participants will understand the organizational structures and processes necessary at the building level to implement and support improvement based on effective schools research.

Objectives:

(1) To describe the rationale for establishing a written, long-term, data-driven improvement plan.

(2) To identify how the school and district roles are related.

(3) To describe the roles and responsibilities of the school improvement team, other staff, parents and students in the development and implementation of the plan.

(4) To understand procedures for securing staff commitment to the development and implementation of the plan.

(5) To describe processes for developing and implementing each component of the building's school improvement program.

(6) To identify processes for monitoring, evaluating and revising the school improvement plan.

Introduction

Successful and comprehensive change is most often the result of a carefully planned effort focused on the individual school, actively supported by the district, and collaboratively planned and implemented by the teachers and the other staff within the school. The role of the district in support of the building-based school improvement effort is described in Narrative 5, which should be read carefully.

The focus in this narrative will be on the activities which take place at **the individual school site**. The relationship between the roles and responsibilities of the district steering committee and the school improvement team will be further clarified.

This paper will describe the importance of gathering, analyzing and reporting data on school characteristics and student outcomes. A more detailed explanation of the technical procedures and steps involved is found in Narrative 7.

Terminology introduced in Narrative 5 will be used consistently here as well. The **district** steering committee develops policy, mission, guidelines and general student outcome goals. Words used to signify efforts at the **building** level are school improvement team, beliefs and concerns, specific improvement objectives, and strategies.

What is the Rationale for Emphasizing the Individual Building as the Unit of School Improvement?

John Goodlad, in A Place Called School (1984), makes a strong case for local school decision-making and planning. His plan for school reform calls for restructuring American public education "school by school." He believes the greatest hindrance to educational reform has been the failure to see the local school as a focal point for improvement. Central to any school improvement effort, he states, is staff dialogue about issues and problems, participation in decisions, involvement in actions taken, and responsibility for evaluating results.

The original effective schools research did not identify collaborative decision-making as a specific characteristic of effective schools. Two other bodies of research on school improvement and organizational theory do provide important contributions to participation in improvement efforts.

Research on the implementation of change in education (Fullan, 1982) presents the conclusion that most successful efforts to change schools are controlled by those who implement them--administrators and teachers at the building level. Those who control, and are affected by, the outcomes have most at stake in decisions on what to implement and how to design the process itself.

A second area of research that supports the concept of school improvement as a building-based effort is the body of research on organizational theory. Miles (1981) points out that, in spite of their commonalities, schools are quite idiosyncratic organizations. An innovation that is tailored to the specific needs and concerns of a particular organization is more likely to be embraced by its members. Involving people in the decision-making process gives them a sense of ownership and control over the reform, which is the most effective way to generate a sense of commitment and create the necessary flexibility to address local conditions and needs.

From the specific perspective of a school organization, Monroe County, Florida, School District shares this rationale for designating the individual school as the unit of improvement:

1. When persons who will be affected by decisions participate and share in making those decisions, better decisions are made.
2. When persons are involved in making decisions, they have more ownership and commitment to outcomes.
3. People who function closest to decisions that must be made and who are involved in behaving differently as a result of those decisions are in the best position to help make decisions affecting that operation.
4. When decisions affecting a school center and the educational programs provided by that school center are made by the persons responsible for implementation

and outcomes of the programs, the school can respond more effectively to the needs of its students and the community it serves.

5. If school centers and teachers are to be accountable for results, they should share in making decisions about how the school center will operate (Marburger, 1985, p. 21).

How is a School Staff Oriented to the School Improvement Process?

The first step in the school improvement process is Exploring the Research and Process. This orientation and awareness step is first initiated at the district level, as described in the preceding narrative. As soon as a decision is made to undertake school improvement in the district, this orientation should be provided to all teachers in the district. If that does not occur, or if there is a delay before school improvement is undertaken at the school level, the same steps bear repeating.

It is essential that the professional staff have the opportunity to become familiar with the research and be helped to understand the relationship between research and practice. If an introduction to the research includes appropriate materials, videotapes and related media, background readings, and outside or local experts, the staff will more readily assimilate and accept the information. It will be easier for them to generalize and transfer concepts to their locally felt needs for professional growth, and apply them appropriately.

When orientation has been carefully planned and delivered, the faculty's level of anxiety about change will be diminished. The mystique surrounding research will be dissipated, and consulting the literature will become a more natural activity in decision-making.

It is also helpful for faculty and staff to know that not only will some changes be expected of them, but that there will also be changes in the way things are done at the district level. Shared training experiences form bonds and common goals. Faculty begin to share and speak a common language relative to the characteristics of effective schools and the school improvement process.

What School and District Conditions are Necessary for a School-Based Collaborative Improvement Process to Function Successfully?

The second step in the school improvement process is securing district commitment and resources to support building-based efforts. As described in the previous narrative, district commitment takes the form of written documents, including policy, mission, guidelines and general student outcome goals, and allocation of financial resources. The support of the board of education and central office are crucial to the success of building school improvement efforts. Individual school improvement teams needs to know the expectations and the parameters within which they will work.

In addition to the district's commitment, a significant proportion of the school staff must be interested and willing to undertake this effort. One of the best ways to develop staff's commitment is through the orientation described above, and by consistently involving the entire faculty in the process. Means for doing so are described in Training Session 2.

A question that occasionally arises at this point is the issue of whether schools should be required to take part in the school improvement process, or whether it should be a voluntary building-by-building decision. The district steering committee will need to deal with this question. On the one hand, change efforts have little chance of success without the support of those involved, so some districts provide an opportunity for a school staff to vote on whether they will be a part of the process or not.

On the other hand, the importance of continual improvement of our schools can scarcely be considered a negotiable item. How does a school say to its constituents, "We aren't willing to participate in a process designed to improve the education of your children?"

A mid-point alternative between those two positions, applicable only in a large district, is to proceed with a certain number of schools each year. The first group of schools would be volunteers, in the hope that they would have positive and successful experiences which would increase the motivation of their peers in other schools. The risk here is that by the second or third year, the district may still be in the position of having to mandate participation of the remaining schools, and trainers and facilitators may be faced with their least cooperative audience. One superintendent responded to this dilemma with the challenge "Yes, you may vote not to participate, but in three weeks, submit to me for approval your alternative written proposal regarding your school plans to improve student performance."

How is a School Improvement Team Selected and Trained?

The third step in the overall school improvement process is formation of a leadership group. Narrative 5 describes the selection of the district-level steering committee. At the building level, leadership is provided by the school improvement team.

It is important to remember that school improvement based on effective schools research is a collaborative ongoing process. As such, its success is heavily dependent upon the influence, composition and skills of the school improvement team. "Through collaborative participation in decision-making, an increased sense of psychological ownership can be developed within a team, making it likely that action plans, once decided upon, will be fully implemented by team members" (Schwartz, 1976).

Composition of the School Improvement Team

The establishment of a multi-constituent school improvement team consisting of representatives of the teaching faculty, principal, and others is recommended. The chances of achieving success with minimal disruption are greater when key representatives of groups are involved. Involvement of other staff members increases building-wide commitment to the process, and is discussed in a later section in this narrative.

The following guidelines regarding composition of the teams are suggested by NCESRD Associates (Chrispeels, 1985; Mace-Matluck, 1986; Shoemaker, 1984):

1. Teams should include representative members of the professional and non-professional staff, i.e., young, experienced; male, female; departments and specialists. Parents, community members and students from upper grade levels may also be included.

2. Team members should be individuals who are not afraid to speak up, both to share their opinions with the group and to advocate for school improvement with their peers.
3. Recruit people who are positive about improvement, who embrace the norm of improvement as a natural part of being a professional.
4. Involve people who are opinion leaders to whom other staff members will listen.
5. Seek out individuals with high energy levels and high expectations.
6. Recruit people who possess outstanding analytic skills.
7. Select members with a history of dependability in following through on tasks and assignments, who understand and act upon time commitments.
8. Team members need to be objective and sensitive to the needs of the entire school and district, not just their specific interests.
9. Do not try to rehabilitate negative people by putting them on the team. Their influence may detract and impede progress.
10. The principal should always be a member of the school improvement team.

Selection of the School Improvement Team

Procedures for team **selection** need to be developed. In some schools, the faculty votes or appoints members to serve. In others, the principal solicits volunteers and nominations, and selects from among them. Overall, it is recommended that staff be involved either in nominating or electing these individuals, rather than being unilaterally appointed by the principal or an existing faculty council. It is important to note that an already established work group, such as a curriculum committee or faculty advisory committee, should not be converted or expanded into a school improvement team. Attempts to do this create tension and confusion, which hinder progress.

The Rhode Island Educational Leadership Academy (1986) recommends the following steps for soliciting volunteers and nominees to be considered for membership on the school improvement team:

1. Describe the process steps and school effectiveness variables in an overall way--both orally and in writing. Emphasize that the "whole school" perspective is needed, as opposed to a classroom, grade level, or subject matter perspective.

2. Communicate the tasks and time commitments for involvement to faculty both orally and in writing.
3. Extend invitations to participate to all--with opportunity to gracefully decline or become involved in other ways in implementation stages.
4. Address the personal concerns people might have about becoming involved. i.e., Who will support and finance the effort? Can we get inservice credit? When will meetings be held?
5. Describe training and technical support that will be available to help team members get the job done. Determine felt needs for assistance in conducting meetings, making group decisions, dealing with conflicts, or gathering, analyzing and interpreting data.

Research in organizational theory indicates that the productivity of a group or team is influenced by its **size** as well as its composition. A group size of seven is ideal for effective group dynamics, 10 is tolerable, and 12 is the outside limit (Jay, 1976). If the principal is automatically a member, a representative from support staff is included, and perhaps a parent or student, it becomes apparent that the main variable is the number of teachers involved. In small and middle-sized elementary schools, there may be two primary teachers, two intermediate grade teachers, and one specialist (e.g., special education, music, art, physical education, media). In secondary schools, balance of representation relates to departments or groups of departments (e.g., maths and sciences, humanities, practical arts, etc.). Some schools are characterized by unique "turfdoms" not described in the formal organizational structure, and it is important that these be identified, recognized and represented.

Group size is an important factor, but it is better to exceed the recommended size than to exclude a group that exerts power and influence within the informal structure of the school. The most essential understanding about the size and composition of the school improvement team is that a simple majority should be members of the instructional staff who are directly involved in the teaching/learning process on a daily basis.

The **chairperson** of the school improvement team may be the principal or another team member. It may be well to postpone this decision until the team members are selected. The principal should then consider such factors as the dynamics of present and past relationships among team members, human relations and leadership skills of members and level of training in effective schools and school improvement which they have received. Where these factors are neutral or positive, it can be a strong symbolic move of collaboration to ask the group to discuss and select their own chairperson. In cases where there are potential problems of lack of direction, conflict, or minimal understanding of the tasks ahead, the principal may need to assume the leadership position initially. If a faculty member is chairperson, it must be an individual who is enthusiastic about improvement, courageous about being an advocate of the process to others, and not easily upset by the airing of differing opinions.

To help ensure the continued growth and success of the team effort, the leader must:

1. Be sure that all members clearly understand the purpose of the team effort;
2. Define clearly the roles and responsibilities of team members;
3. Define clearly what tasks go with each role;
4. Help members understand how best to perform the tasks as well as encourage members to become better at their tasks; and
5. Consistently and genuinely involve the members in the decision-making and planning process.

It is also important to select a **recorder**, or decide that this will be a rotating responsibility. The recorder takes minutes and disseminates them after the meeting, helps prepare the agenda for the next meeting, and circulates the agenda and meeting reminder to all staff in advance of the next scheduled date.

Length of term and rotation of membership on the school improvement team also needs to be decided early. Because school improvement is an ongoing, long-term process, the team needs to have continuity. By the same token, potential team members need to know how long-range a commitment they are making. One suggestion is to consider the initial length of service on the school improvement team as three years, but to begin replacing some members after the second year. Succeeding members would then have two-year terms. In other words, half of the new team would serve for two years, and half would serve for three years, thus providing a carry-over for the first group of new team members. From then on, school improvement team members would serve for two years, with half of them changing each year. It is essential that the initial team remain together for at least the first two years of planning and implementation.

Training of the School Improvement Team

Prior to and as the team begins work, its performance as a leadership group is enhanced through a variety of staff development. These staff development programs address both individual skills, which contribute to group processes, and group skills. They might include:

1. Leadership training;
2. More in-depth training in the effective schools research and process;
3. Training in data gathering, analysis and interpretation;
4. Forms of student assessment;
5. Group process skills, i.e., trust building, conflict resolution, and problem solving;
6. Organizational skills, i.e., developing written plans, delegating and follow-up; and
7. Research on the change process.

Management analysts and organizational researchers have studied a wide range of team efforts and have isolated five major reasons that teams fail.

1. Members do not understand the function, purpose, or goals of the team effort.
2. Members do not understand what roles to play or what tasks are their responsibility.
3. Members do not understand how to do their tasks or how to work as part of a team.
4. Members do not "buy into" the function, purpose, or goals of the team effort.
5. Members reject their roles or responsibilities.

It is clear that the suggested training topics would help prevent these potential causes of team failure. Providing teachers with the opportunity to be involved in decision-making is only part of collaboration. In order to fully participate, teachers must be provided with the necessary skills.

What are the Roles and Responsibilities of the School Improvement Team?

The main purpose of the school improvement team is to create an internal structure through which various perspectives can and will flow and to ensure that the school improvement process has a broad base of support. The team acts to lead, manage and facilitate each step of the school improvement effort. Specific functions include:

1. Serve as key leadership group;
2. Develop two-way communication structures with entire school staff;
3. Collect, organize and analyze student assessment data;
4. Collect, organize and analyze perceptual data on school characteristics;
5. Reach consensus on important needs and objectives;
6. Target and gain staff acceptance of areas for improvement;
7. Facilitate continuous staff involvement and input;
8. Develop the school improvement plan;
9. Review the plan with the faculty;
10. Meet periodically to monitor progress after implementation;
11. Evaluate progress and outcomes;
12. Prepare new strategies or plans as needed;
13. Initiate ongoing staff development activities for team and staff based on identified improvement objectives; and
14. Encourage planning and collegial relationships (Shoemaker, 1984; Mace-Matluck, 1986; Chrispeels, 1985).

At certain steps in the school improvement process (discussed later in this narrative) team members may serve as the chairpersons of task forces dealing with specific tasks. As chair of a task force, the staff member leads the smaller group and reports on progress to the standing school improvement team. This is a coordination and communication role that is very important in helping the team receive input from the full staff.

An essential aspect of school improvement team leadership is **two-way communication** with the entire staff of the school, including instructional and support personnel. Two-way communication includes provision for soliciting and receiving input **from** staff as well as procedures for disseminating information and decisions **to** all staff. Ongoing communication on a regular basis may take the form of:

1. Circulating or posting minutes of team meetings promptly to all staff members;
2. Circulating or posting agendas of upcoming meetings, including names of team members who will answer questions and receive input; and
3. Opening meetings to any staff members who wish to attend as observers.

The importance of this two-way communication cannot be overemphasized. If it is not consistent and visible, the school improvement team may be perceived as an elite, "inside group," doing their own thing behind closed doors. This breeds mistrust and lack of commitment. In contrast, thorough communication and discussion makes every staff member a part of the effort.

Just as the school improvement team must abide by its commitment to provide clear, open communication, other staff members have an obligation to help reach and abide by consensus. One simple definition of consensus is that all agree, once a decision is reached, they will not interfere with its implementation. It is essential that staff members express their opinions and perceptions openly, but be willing to support group decisions once they are endorsed by the majority.

How are Other Members of the School Staff Involved in the School Improvement Process?

Building-level school improvement is led by a school improvement team. The true test of this leadership is the presence of willing followership.

> A considerable body of research supports the idea that genuine staff involvement in school-wide decision making is necessary for the development and implementation of school improvement. For example, having some degree of control over decisions that affect one's life is a defining feature of community. Faculty (and student) responsibility for making school rules and determining penalties for their infringement was one of the major attributes of safe, orderly and well disciplined schools. Participative decision making has been found to contribute to effective staff development activities. Involving relevant parties in decision making has been associated with good leadership (Purkey & Smith, 1985, p. 381).

The following suggestions for involving staff and developing building-wide commitment to school improvement are from the Detroit School Planning Guide, Detroit Public Schools (1989-91):

1. Conduct awareness sessions for staff, parents and others on effective schools research and its relationship to the planning process.
2. Be sure to continue these information sessions throughout the planning process. The awareness session is not a one-time, episodic event.
3. Involve the total staff in the review and approval of each step in the process.
4. Involve parents, students, support staff and community at key points in plan development and implementation.
5. Solicit and encourage staff input at each step of the planning process.
6. Encourage all staff members (even parents and students) to become members of subcommittees and/or task forces.
7. Obtain staff approval of improvement objectives and evaluation measures as well as improvement strategies.
8. Be sure that each staff member has specific responsibilities for the implementation of at least one improvement objective.
9. Obtain approval of staff of the written draft plan. It is suggested that each staff member, as well as the team, sign the plan to indicate their endorsement.
10. Distribute a copy of the approved plan to each staff member.
11. Share the plan with parents, students and the community.
12. Give regular progress reports at staff meetings.
13. Regular meetings of the school improvement team should focus on plan monitoring and evaluation.
14. Recognize and reward accomplishments with special events and celebrations of successes.

15. Conduct periodic, systematic benchmark checks of progress to reaffirm or redirect implementation activities.

16. Prepare a yearly progress report. Collect evidence on the extent to which each objective was achieved. Prepare a report of this evidence. Share the report with the entire staff. Use the data as input for identifying new improvement objectives, or renewing efforts on continuing needs as the school improvement plan is continuously refined.

The first year of implementation is a particularly critical one for staff involvement. This is the time when the process is most vulnerable, because the level of intensity of activity is high, but the knowledge level of staff may be low. Because of the amount of work to be done and the need to involve as many as possible in meaningful endeavor, every staff member may be involved in a subcommittee or task force with a specific assignment.

From a practical standpoint, the principal and a small number of leaders cannot, by themselves, do all of the work necessary to make significant improvements in the school. Therefore, assistance is both beneficial and necessary to the process.

> Task forces have been used as an effective means to share decision making and to involve more people in the implementation of the action plan. A task force is a short-term, sharply defined group which focuses on accomplishment of specific goals. Often task forces are employed to review and define a problem, explore a solution, select a solution, or just make recommendations. Their term of existence, task, membership, level of authority, and resources must be clearly defined before people agree to join the group. Task forces need to be serious, energetic, and hard-working. Representation should be broad, but expertise should also fit the task. Task forces should model open communication and rotated role-taking to facilitate an atmosphere of equality. Not only is participation in school improvement expanded through task force organization, but during this step, commitment to the process builds because action decisions are being made through agreement and responsibility (Miller & Corcoran, 1985).

Task forces are particularly important at two steps in the process: gathering and analyzing data, and examining effective practices to select strategies to match the improvement objectives. Their role will be discussed in more detail when those activities are described later in this narrative. It is important to give all staff members the opportunity to serve on a task force. Custodians can make valuable contributions to groups dealing with climate or safe and orderly environment. Being welcomed as equal members in the group affirms their importance to the total school. Other support staff should be involved as well.

The following review of the steps in school improvement points out ways in which to make the process truly participative:

Exploring the Research and Process

All staff (instructional and support) should attend the awareness/orientation sessions. Trainers should make it a point to show the relationship of specific elements of effectiveness to the roles and responsibilities of different groups of staff. Staff development for involvement in school improvement should be ongoing and consist of three stages:

1. Awareness and Planning Stage -- An overview of school effectiveness research, including effective classroom strategies, should occur early in the process.
2. Training Stage -- Inservice should include content and skills which will bring about changes in professional behavior and assist teachers in the implementation of strategies identified in the school improvement plan.
3. Implementation and Maintenance Stage -- Staff development activities should be directly related to the improvement objectives identified by the school staff.

Securing District Commitment and Resources

All staff should be given the information discussed earlier and in Narrative 5 regarding expectations and allocated resources from the district level.

Forming the Team and Developing Team Skills

The importance of involving all groups of staff in the composition and selection of the team is discussed above. While it may be only the school improvement team members who receive more advanced training in group skills, all staff should be fully aware of what skills they are learning and why they are important to success of the school effort.

Affirming the Mission and Belief System

As described in Narrative 5, a general mission statement is developed at the district level. However, it should be reviewed and affirmed in a general session of all building staff. A group process should be used to generate additional concerns and beliefs unique to the individual school. Such a process is described in Training Session 2 on affirming mission.

Gathering and Analyzing Data on School Characteristics and Student Outcomes

The entire staff should be asked to help identify areas of student performance and sources of data to include in the profile. Staff members will also have the opportunity to join task forces to share this work. For example, there may be a task force to gather data on school characteristics by administering a correlate assessment. Another task force may analyze student achievement data. A third may be involved in looking at archival data (e.g., attendance, discipline, drop-outs, etc.).

Developing a Profile of School and Student Status

The task forces who gather and analyze data will compile reports which form a description of the current status of the school. This report should then be distributed and discussed by the full staff.

Identifying Data-Driven, Mission-Oriented Improvement Objectives

All staff review the school status report and participate in a group activity identifying strengths, weaknesses, and priority concerns. The school improvement team proceeds with the data this input provides to identify tentative improvement objectives. The objectives are then shared with the group, along with rationale for focusing on them.

Examining Effective Curriculum and Instructional Strategies Related to Improvement Objectives

Staff are involved in a new group of task forces to check research and compare it to current practices in the building. Analyzing current practice may be done by surveying staff or holding grade-level meetings, perhaps even doing peer observations in classrooms.

Selecting Strategies and Developing the Plan for Implementation and Monitoring

Task forces again report to the entire staff, who prioritize possible strategies and discuss their implications. Included in this step may be identification of staff development needed to assist teachers in meeting the improvement objectives in their own teaching.

Implementing and Monitoring Results

It is a rare school improvement plan that does not have some provision which affects each and every staff member in some change of behavior. The school improvement team, however, has major responsibility for identifying indicators of success and monitoring their presence.

Refining and Renewing Improvement Efforts

All staff review the results of the year's efforts and provide input on revision and refinement to their school improvement team members.

A simple rule-of-thumb is that the school improvement team seeks input at each major decision point.

How are Parents and Community Members Involved in the School Improvement Process?

"There are no unimportant adults in the life of a child," said Ron Edmonds, early founder of the Effective Schools movement (Detroit Public Schools, 1989-91). If one believes this statement and subscribes to the belief that schools are for teaching and learning for all, then it is reasonable to assume that parents are also important adults and should have a role in the school improvement process. Not only do parents have a right to be informed and involved, schools need them. Edmonds also said, "If we are going to realize any real measure of school improvement, we must work to get teachers to understand and accept the limitations of what they can do by themselves."

Just as two-way communication is important with staff within the building, it is essential with parents and community members who observe school activities closely and often receive their only accounts from their children's comments. It should be the responsibility of all members of the educational community to share information internally as well as externally to the community at large. Keeping all stakeholders informed of the developmental steps of student improvement helps to alleviate misconceptions and diffuse possible resistance due to lack of knowledge and understanding.

In addition, input regarding the determination and priority order of goals and objectives needs to be solicited from the various communities. Suggestions for possible improvement strategies should be sought and welcomed.

Since the school improvement process requires financial resources and released time for team meetings, it is important that parents and the public understand its importance and implications. Suggested ways to communicate to parents and the public include:

1. Presenting brief programs to local service organizations;
2. Including "school improvement updates" in parent newsletter;
3. Having a school improvement booth at Open House with information and someone to answer questions;
4. Having an effective schools bulletin board prominently displayed; and
5. Developing a school improvement/effective schools logo based on the mission or belief statements and using it on all communication to staff, students and the community.

These types of communication are available to all members of the school community. Opportunities for more active participation may be provided to representatives of parents with students enrolled, non-parent community members, and members of the business community. In some situations, a parent and/or community member is made an actual member of the school improvement team. In other situations, ad hoc groups of parents and community people are formed for specific tasks, similar to the task forces discussed above. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these approaches.

Parent Representation on the School Improvement Team

If a parent is a formal member of the school improvement team, he/she would be involved to the same degree and on the same basis as other team members. She/he would be expected to attend all training events with the team, be present at all team meetings, and have an equal share of responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the program. Advantages are the perspectives from the community that the team gains and the role this team member can play as credible advocate with parents and taxpayers. Difficulties relate to finding a high calibre, skilled volunteer with a flexible enough schedule to participate fully in training sessions and planning meetings.

Gathering Data on School Characteristics and Student Outcomes

Assessment of school characteristics (Effective Schools correlates) often includes a perceptual survey sent to parents or to a random sample of parents. This provides a formal input role available to a wider representation. Some districts have also added survey questions related to community members' perceptions of the achievement of students and the appropriateness of curriculum features. In addition to the role of survey respondent, school improvement teams may consider involving community members on the task forces who analyze the data and prepare the reports to include in the school status report. This provides an authentic role for community members and additional help with the task, but may raise problems of confidentiality.

Identifying Data-Driven, Mission-Oriented Improvement Objectives

Small groups of parents might be invited to meet and review data to indicate their level of satisfaction with overall student performance. They may also participate in a group process for prioritizing concerns, similar to what is done with the entire school staff. If community members are involved in this step, it is essential that the data be summarized in a very clear fashion, and that the group limit its discussion to school-wide performance without comment on their own children's performance or experience. It is also essential to clarify their role as providing input, not setting the improvement objectives. Their input will be shared with the school staff, who will participate with the team in determining the improvement objectives.

Selecting Strategies and Implementing the School Improvement Plan

Once improvement objectives are set by the school improvement team based on input from the entire staff (and community members if this was done), the objectives should be communicated to all parents through the newsletter or other means. Another set of small group meetings might be held, or there might be discussion at a meeting of the parent organization, focused on what parents see as ways they could help address these objectives. For example if an improvement objective related to some aspect of math achievement, parents might adopt a strategy of more consistent support at home, and might request that training for parents in how to assist their children be included in the school improvement plan. Soliciting input at this stage is not intended to place parents in the role of determining what the teachers should be doing differently, but to challenge them to look at their own role in helping students improve. This is a true teamwork orientation.

Monitoring results, refining and renewing the plan

Yearly progress reports will be completed and should certainly be available to parents and community members. At some point, parents should be surveyed again to compare perceptions and analyze what the community observes as the impact of the school improvement effort. However, annual surveys may create too much work for the school improvement team staff and may not allow enough time for change to occur. It may be more valid to repeat surveys of community perceptions every three years.

Successfully including parents and community members depends on making their role clear and keeping the focus on student outcomes. They must understand that they provide input and information which is valued, but is combined with other sources of input before decisions are made. Discussions with parents and community members must also be limited to overall school factors, not individual students or teachers.

How are Students Involved in the School Improvement Process?

At the secondary level, a representative from the student council is sometimes included on the school improvement team. Many instruments for analyzing school characteristics include a form for student input. If students are not involved in these ways, they should at least be made aware that school improvement is an ongoing process and that teacher work consists of a great deal of planning and training in addition to their classroom responsibilities. If educators reflect upon the influences that led them into teaching and shaped their perceptions of how they teach, they may realize that they knew a great deal about teaching and learning when they were still students. Students in upper elementary grades and secondary schools often can share interesting and revealing insights from the learners' perspective.

Other suggestions for involving students in awareness of school improvement include:

1. A "kick-off" rally for the start of the implementation year;
2. Student involvement in a contest to design the school improvement logo;
3. Student presentations to the student council and other student groups and service clubs about specific aspects of school effectiveness. Most middle and adolescent students understand things like climate and high expectations. Encourage their support;
4. A suggestion box for students to submit ideas for improving the school. Present awards to those whose ideas are implemented by the administration or the school improvement team;
5. Improvement buttons and student recognition awards based on improvement, not just highest achievement; and
6. The school improvement logo and a "pride" statement on school tee-shirts.

What is the Relationship Between the District's Mission Statement and the Beliefs and Concerns of the Individual School Staff?

The mission statement of the district provides the foundation for identifying goals and direction in school improvement. It reflects the shared values of staff and community and is expressed in terms that will lead to improvement objectives which can be measured against identified student performance outcomes.

All staff at the building level need to be involved in a process of reviewing and affirming the district mission. This may take place through a group process similar to the following:

1. Each staff member reads the mission statement, circling what he/she feels are key words and concepts and jotting down the points considered most important, agreed with, disagreed with, unclear, etc.

2. The group facilitator guides a phrase-by-phrase discussion of the mission statement. As circled words and concepts are encountered, group members share their reactions and concerns with the group. During this discussion, a recorder keeps track of issues and questions raised.

3. The group identifies some of the questions raised as simply requiring clarification from the district level. It may be helpful to have a teacher member from the district steering committee present to provide this type of assistance.

4. Other questions and issues are identified for inclusion in a set of school belief statements which may be added to the district mission statement. These would be more specific concerns that relate to unique aspects of the student population or community served by this school. The school improvement effort in each building would then be guided by the combined values of the district mission statement and the school belief statements.

The major concept to remember is that no school should be set upon a course that is in conflict with or contradiction of the district's stated mission. However, each school should have the right to focus on its own specific needs and concerns. (If there does not appear to be such leeway, the district mission statement may be too lengthy and prescriptive. If so, it should be re-examined.)

What is the School Improvement Team's Role in Gathering, Analyzing and Reporting Data on School Characteristics and Student Outcomes?

The specific steps to be taken regarding use of data at both the district and building level are described in Narrative 7. Two major concepts are important to be mentioned here.

First, the district steering committee's role is to study district-wide data on the entire student population, while the individual schools analyze and interpret data about their own students' achievement. This is an important distinction because it responds to staff anxieties about being evaluated and compared on a building-to-building basis. Comparisons made should align building-level performance against district-wide performance, not against other schools. Progress should be measured by looking at improvement from one year's building scores to the next, and by moving closer to the district-wide level if this school was lower in achievement. There should be no evaluation of a school's improvement efforts based on comparisons with other schools in dissimilar communities.

Another role of the district in data gathering and analysis is one of technical assistance and support. The arrangements that are made to utilize data at the district level (hardware, software, personnel) should result in procedures and equipment that can be used by the individual building teams as they work with their own data. In order to address the equity aspect of school effectiveness, this process must include disaggregation by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and other groupings that are considered important in that context.

The second concept to be emphasized here is the need for two types of data. One will be quantitative data on student performance. At this point in time, many districts have only standardized achievement scores to use for this purpose. Districts that have developed criterion-referenced tests and other forms of assessment for all students are certainly encouraged to use that data.

In addition to quantitative data about student performance, it is important to study the organizational characteristics that have become known as the correlates of effective schools. This is done through surveys of staff, parents and sometimes students. It is perceptual data, and is primarily useful in deciding whether there are school characteristics that present a barrier to changes in teacher behavior that will benefit students. For some time, schools concerned themselves solely with correlates such as school climate, and saw little change in student performance because the goals they thus identified did not directly impact on delivery of instruction. Current emphasis is to combine analysis of school characteristics and student performance

Two task forces may be established to gather and analyze data: one to work with student performance data and one to conduct the school characteristics (correlates) survey. Depending upon number of staff available, these task forces may be further subdivided by subject area achievement data, or by population group surveyed (staff, parents, etc.) The reports of their analysis and interpretation will form the first major section of the written school improvement plan, known as the school status report. More information on reporting the data is given in Narrative 7, and other contents of the school improvement plan are described later in this narrative.

What is the Process for Identifying School Improvement Objectives?

Perhaps the most difficult step in the school improvement process is identifying mission-oriented, data-driven improvement objectives. This identification process is described in more detail in Narrative 7. For purposes of clarifying the roles of the district and the individual school improvement team, it is important to emphasize that the district sets general student performance outcomes. Individual schools set their own improvement objectives in line with the mission statement and their specific beliefs about their responsibility to their students. Where districts mandate specific annual goals, there is little motivation for staff members to examine their own school setting and their own students' achievement.

The district mission statement and general student performance outcome goals set the "ends" toward which each school improvement team must move. Decisions about which area of student performance most clearly shows a need for change, and how that change should be brought about (the "means") are the responsibility of the staff at the individual school site. Appropriate improvement objectives are consistent with the values expressed in the mission and belief statements, and are clearly influenced and supported by the data gathered and analyzed (including disaggregation) at the building level.

Another problem occurs regarding the confusion of objectives with strategies. Too often, school improvement teams or staff members focus prematurely on programs or funding sources, rather than on identification of objectives. For example, a school may have received a grant award and be sidetracked into discussions about how to spend the money. This is like going shopping without a grocery list. Funding is a resource for implementing a strategy, and should be discussed after objectives and strategies are selected. In fact, when an objective is clear and strategies are set, how to spend the money will be self-evident.

In the same way, implementation of a new program is not an objective. A school which had been designated to receive a Writing-to-Read computer laboratory was having trouble tying its objective "To implement Writing-to-Read" directly with its student performance data. The solution was to define a clear improvement objective, i.e., "By 1992, 80% of our students will receive a rating of outstanding or exceptional on a holistic writing sample assessment." It was then apparent that implementing the lab was not the objective. It was one of the strategies for meeting the objective.

Just as effective instruction is closely tied to clearly stated objectives, school effectiveness and efficient use of staff energy is tied to maintaining focus on mission-oriented, data-driven school improvement objectives.

How Does the School Improvement Team Select Strategies to Meet the School Improvement Objectives?

Narrative 7 stresses the importance of identifying a limited number of school improvement objectives so attention can be carefully focused, energy and motivation of staff preserved, and the probabilities of measurable success increased. It is suggested that no more than three improvement objectives be identified. These should be divided between objectives arising from student performance data, and those based on the perceptual data on school characteristics. For example, one goal may relate to improving the climate of the school for both teaching and learning; while one or two others relate to specific instructional areas for increasing student learning.

The next step, once improvement objectives are identified, is to examine effective curriculum and instructional strategies related to each objective. It is critical that the team and staff get beyond current practices at the building level and venture beyond the limits of their own collective wisdom. This is one of the steps at which it is wise to involve all staff, or more staff who are not team members, on subcommittees or task forces. There should be a task force for each improvement objective. A school improvement team member should serve on each committee.

The team's charge is to:

1. Search for literature and research findings that identify "what works" for student success in this instructional area (or what improves an identified school characteristic). This search will range in scope based on available resources. At the very least, it would include reviewing the past several years of a related professional publication to identify the current topics being discussed and innovations being tried and tested. ASCD's Educational Leadership is a valuable resource, as are the content-area journals of the professional associations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. A more extensive effort would include an ERIC search, visits to schools with exemplary results in this subject, and telephone calls to key practitioners. The focus must include curriculum (what is taught), instructional strategies (how it is taught) and assessment (how it is measured).

   This is a crucial step that must not be omitted. It stands in contrast to "brainstorming what we might try" or the tendency for individual staff members to campaign for their favorite idea or program. Just as the improvement objective was selected based on data, the strategies by which to meet the objective must be selected based on research.

2. The second step in selecting improvement strategies is to determine the extent to which present practices in the school match what has been found to be effective. There are several methods for doing this:

   a. Grade-level or department meetings may be held. A member of the task force would share the findings from literature and research, and teachers at that grade level or of that subject would reflect on how they compare with what occurs in their classrooms. This method works best, but depends upon a high trust level among staff members and a high degree of commitment towards improvement.

b. A "blind survey" of practices could be developed and administered to staff. By "blind," it is meant that questions would be asked about whether this practice or that is employed, without indicating which is the more desirable and found to be more effective. This may be more accurate than self-description through grade level or department meetings.

c. If resources are available to provide the time, task force members may conduct peer observations to give them an awareness of how the identified skill or subject is usually taught in the building. Again, a high level of trust is essential.

The purpose of checking current practice against the literature and research is twofold. The first, often overlooked, is to identify and reinforce strengths in present practice. Research can provide an opportunity for celebration as well as a challenge for change. In addition to strengths of the staff as a whole, task force members may informally take note of teachers who would be helpful as peer trainers or coaches during the improvement process.

The second purpose of checking current practice is to decide what should be changed, added or abandoned. If, for example, there were no literature or research to support reading aloud to students, this might be a practice that should be discontinued in order to allow time for more productive methods.

3. Based on a comparison of effective curriculum and instructional strategies and current practice, strategies to be added, improved or replaced are identified. It is recommended that more than one strategy be selected for each objective, but

not more than five. The number will depend upon the scope and intensity of each one.

For each identified strategy, the planning process described in the next section includes specific discussion of how it will be done, by whom, when, with what resources, etc. An integral part of any change is training, so provision of needed staff development is one essential component. Each task force will complete a portion of the school improvement plan that will include the information described in the next section.

At this point, questions often arise about aspects of district-adopted curricula that may not be current or may be in conflict with recent findings of research. It is for this reason that Narrative 5 emphasized that central office staff must allow flexibility at the building level, and must change their role from monitor to facilitator. If the staff at an individual school can clearly demonstrate a strong, well-founded reason for requesting to deviate from prescribed district curriculum, their request should be taken seriously and given a professional response from the district level. It is recommended that this staff be allowed to "pilot" the requested change, with assistance from the district level and with the understanding that any decision for a district-wide change would depend upon demonstrable results with students.

At all times, the curriculum development process of a district should be responsive to feedback from the building level on needs for change and improvement. While a district steering committee develops guidelines for an improvement process at the building level, it should not consider itself immune to needs for improvement based on feedback (data) from the individual schools, but should model the collaboration and openness that are essential for success.

How is the School Improvement Plan Developed, Written and Communicated?

Once a school improvement team has a clear picture of the school's needs and has identified approaches to possible solutions, a written school improvement plan is developed, circulated to staff for feedback, and consensus obtained. Although school improvement is a mission that should exist in the mind and heart of every stakeholder in its community, a written plan is needed to make the effort tangible. A written plan has value as:

1. A management tool to indicate specific improvement strategies as they relate to student outcome needs;
2. Evidence that the staff is not satisfied with static conditions and will be taking specific steps to make needed changes in the teaching for learning process;
3. Support and framework for building-based school improvement efforts;
4. A set of benchmarks to monitor and show progress towards improvement objectives;
5. A communication tool to share with others;
6. A public relations document for parents, school board and community; and
7. A symbol of commitment to continuous growth.

It may be helpful to develop the written school improvement plan in three major sections: **Introduction, Status Report**, and **Action Plans**. Contents of the **Introduction** would include:

1. Rationale for school improvement;
2. District mission statement and school belief statements;
3. A brief description of the steps that have been undertaken at the building level; and
4. Acknowledgement of team members and others who have made significant contributions

The second section, **Status Report**, would include the reports of data on student performance and school characteristics. As described in Narrative 7, these would consist of graphs accompanied by brief (2-3 sentence) narrative interpretations of strengths and concerns.

The third section, **Action Plans**, would include a **subsection** for each of the improvement objectives identified by the school improvement team with the involvement of all staff. Appendix A contains a variety of planning forms which may be used by task forces and school improvement teams as they develop the action steps. Each subsection would include:

1. The stated school improvement objective;
2. Rationale for identifying it as a priority (with reference to the district mission, school belief statements, and the data);
3. Strategies selected to meet the improvement objective;
4. Flow chart, table, or narrative descriptions of the implementation plan for each strategy; and
5. Procedures for monitoring progress toward the objective.

Implementation plans must be very specific and time-oriented. They address the traditional journalistic questions of who, what, when, where, why and how. For each action step, the following information should be provided:

1. Persons responsible -- to prepare, plan, lead, coordinate;
2. Persons involved -- all staff, math teachers, support staff, etc.;
3. Resources needed -- materials, money, released time, outside consultants;
4. Timeline -- schedule of dates or time periods during which each step will take place; and
5. Indicators of progress and procedures for monitoring.

Two aspects of the school improvement plan that merit further discussion are the training needed, and the indicators and procedures for monitoring. Throughout the narratives, it has been emphasized that change cannot take place without enabling its participants through **staff development**. It is important that districts allow time in their master calendar and resources in the budget for school-based staff development as well as district-planned programs. Schools will vary in the strategies they select. One school may decide to implement training in Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) to address high expectations for student success, while another may be concerned about student writing and want to learn about writing as a process approach or whole language. Allocating all staff development time and resources to uniform, district-wide programs eliminates the opportunity for teachers to learn new skills that are directly relevant to the objectives they have identified.

A second aspect that needs emphasis is the importance of deciding what indicators will be accepted as **evidence of progress** towards the improvement objective, and what procedure will be followed to **monitor** them. The task force developing the action plan should identify indicators that staff are implementing the strategy (process) as well as evidence that there is an effect on student performance (product). Periodic checks should be made at designated times throughout implementation to assure progress AND to provide cause for celebration and motivation for continued effort.

How is the School Improvement Plan Implemented and Monitored?

Once the task forces have selected strategies, written action steps, and identified staff development needs and monitoring indicators, it is up to the school improvement team to combine their work into an overall school plan. One way to do this is to refer to the *timeline/schedule* category of each action plan and lay out a master schedule of activities that would be occurring in the building. This will show the team whether the action steps are feasible in terms of time commitments. If there are too many steps to be undertaken at the same time, the team sets priorities and adjusts accordingly. Another approach is to begin with the *resources needed* category and compile requests into a school improvement budget. If there are more proposals for staff development than resources will provide, the team again makes needed revisions.

The revised, complete school improvement plan should be shared with the total staff during an inservice day, or at some time when adequate opportunity can be provided for discussion and clarification. It is particularly important that all staff members know what will be expected of them, what training will be provided for them, and how progress will be monitored. The initial presentation by the team should be followed by opportunity for input, after which the team may further revise the plan. A second presentation of the revised plan should be made to all staff. At this time, staff should make a public expression of commitment to the plan. This may take the form of verbal approval, or of every staff member signing what will become the foreword of the written school improvement plan.

This synthesized improvement plan is then the responsibility of the team to implement. The team manages the overall implementation process, communicates with the entire staff and community, arranges the professional development activities, secures resources, and monitors overall progress. The whole staff, parents (and older students) commit to support the project, serve on task forces or subcommittees, and promote positive communication.

The principal becomes a key factor in assisting with preparation and coordination. He/she helps guide project management activities, maintains a participatory style of leadership, and shows patience with ambiguity, inefficiency and the pace of implementation of which the team is capable. The principal must convey optimism, enthusiasm, and certainty of eventual success. The resources that were to have been committed at the district level before embarking upon the school improvement effort will be budgeted and accessed. The principal may also be able to reallocate or designate discretionary funds from the building budget to assist the effort. He/she may be the communication link in calling upon central office staff to fulfill their roles as facilitators and technical assistants.

An important consideration is the monitoring of progress. This should clearly be seen as a team function, not solely the role of the principal. Indicators to be monitored should be identified by the individuals who will be responsible for implementing the changes. Strategies to be implemented are described, but should not prevent all opportunity for teacher decision-making. Everyone must be informed about methods used to monitor progress so that they will be supportive of the plan, will hold themselves accountable, and the public will know that staff accept responsibility. Some ways of monitoring implementation by teachers may be review of lesson plans, peer observation, and small group discussion at staff meetings. Grade levels, departments or individual teachers may be assigned a certain week to report their attempts and successes in the "improvement updates" section of the staff bulletin. "Trade-offs" of a new effort for past practice are often welcomed by staff who are concentrating on something new. For example, the principal may make an offer that regular lesson plans need not be turned in as usual if staff members will use a cooperative learning strategy at least once a week, and submit that new plan to the school improvement team to share with others.

The school improvement team will continue to meet on a regular basis during implementation, though their work may not be as intense. They need to be available to receive feedback and questions from staff members, deal with concerns, and adjust the overall plan as necessary. They may also need to communicate with central office staff or the district steering committee.

What May Be a Feasible Sequence and Timeline for the Building-Level School Improvement Process?

A sequence of school improvement activities has been described throughout Narratives 5 and 6. Each of these activities is important, and the order in which they are presented is based on successful practice in the field. Greater variations exist in timelines for implementation.

The Trainers Guide for the Effective Schools Program of the San Diego Office of Education reminds participants that "the process of change takes time and the Effective Schools Program takes at least two to three years to implement." Narrative 5 outlined factors which affect a district's readiness to undertake school improvement. These conditions also impact upon the scope and pace at which improvement efforts can take place at the building level. Every school and district context is unique, so a prescribed timeline is not disseminated by NCESRD. Appendix B provides samples from a variety of schools and districts which may be helpful references. Two crucial issues are that greater success is related to more thorough planning, and that attention to the teaching-learning process should not be indefinitely delayed by preoccupation with school characteristics.

What Steps are Necessary to Refine and Renew School Improvement Efforts?

From the time of initial orientation training onward, it must be made clear that school improvement is a change process and that observable change takes time. Because the improvement objectives may be stated in terms of a three- to five-year time period, the short-term indicators that will be used to monitor progress are crucial to sustaining the momentum of the school improvement effort.

In addition, the school improvement plan should be considered a fluid document. While objectives are stated over an extended time period, monitoring will occur on a periodic basis, including data analysis annually if tests are administered on a yearly basis. The authors of the San Diego Trainers Guide note that school plans are revised when there are changes in the data collected.

It has often been said that "nothing succeeds like success." The monitoring aspect of the school improvement plan will provide evidence of successes which should be publicized and celebrated. Hansen and Marburger (1989) offer the following suggestions for all members of various communities involved with school improvement:

1. Keep an ear and an eye out for small as well as large achievements in schools and publicize them.
2. Take time to savor the pleasure that comes from achieving something worthwhile.

Materials in Training Session 9 provide further insights into the mutual impact of change and school culture. Suggestions are given which will enhance the ability of the organization to institutionalize the process of school improvement so that continuous growth becomes a norm of the organization.

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Appendix A

Examples of Forms Used to Develop Action Plans

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

School Improvement Action Plan

School:____________________________

School year:________________________

Plan no.:___________________________

Planning Team Members

1. Goal:

2. Problem statement:

3. Objective(s):

4. Strategy:

5. Rationale:

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

School Improvement Action Plan

SCHOOL______________________________ SCHOOL YEAR______________ GOAL____

OBJECTIVE: ____

Activities: Steps to be taken	Persons Responsible	Resources Needed, Persons Involved	Schedule	Monitoring, Evaluation

ACTION PLAN

GOAL (OUTCOME):

KEY EVENTS	TIME LINE	RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCES NEEDED
	A S O N D J F M A M J J		

TOWN LINE SCHOOL

19 __ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 19 __

1. *AREA OF CONCERN (____ New ____ Continuing From ______)*
   Year

Correlate: ____

Topic: ____

2. *PROBLEM/NEED STATEMENT*

a. Evidence of Problem

b. Causes(s) of Problem

c. Possible Solution(s)/Alternatives (Star Solutions/Alternatives Selected)

TOWN LINE SCHOOL
19 __ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 19 __

Correlate: ____________________

3. *OBJECTIVE(S)*

3.1

3.2

3.3

4. *STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES TO REACH OBJECTIVE(S)*

Considerations/Constraints in Selecting Alternatives/Solutions

TOWN LINE SCHOOL

Page___ of___ **Correlate:** ______________________________

5. *IMPLEMENTATION PLAN*
Objective #___ - ______________________________

____

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Action Steps to be Taken	Person(s) Responsible	Who Must Be Kept Informed/Involved	Timeline	Evidence of Accomplishment
5.1				
5.2				
5.3				
5.4				
5.5				
5.6				

TOWN LINE SCHOOL

Page __ of __ **Correlate:** ______________________________

6. *EVIDENCE OF ATTAINMENT*	**Action Steps to be Taken**	**Person(s) Responsible**	**Who Must Be Kept Informed/Involved**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of Accomplishment**
a. Evaluation: **1. Method(s):** **2. Activities:** **b. Evidence for Success: (Criteria)**					
7. *RESOURCES NEEDED*					

Page __ of __

TOWN LINE SCHOOL

19__ SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 19__

Correlate: ____________________

BUILDING PLANNING TEAM/CORRELATE TEAM PLANS FOR PRESENTATION OF ACTION PLAN TO THE SCHOOL STAFF

Outline of Presentation:	**Individual Assignments:**
Team Notes:	

Campus Action Plan

GOAL ______________________________

OBJECTIVE ______________________________

Activities	Staff Involved	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Date Planned	Date Completed
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

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211 East Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
512/476-6861

CAMPUS____________________ 19__ -19__ **CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

NEED: Campus Goal #___:	SBOE GOAL(S)__________ DISTRICT GOAL(S)________ *Effective Schools Correlate:*

OBJECTIVE/ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS/ ADJUSTMENT	EVALUATION

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1990 LEAD Principals' Academy

PLANNING / IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

School Improvement Project

School : ______________________________

Dates	Purpose	Activities	Persons and Resources	Milestones / Assessment

Implementation Plan

Year ______

Improvement Objective:

Evidence of Success:

Strategies	Correlate(s) Impacted	Person(s) Involved in Implementation	Target Date & Evidence of Attainment	Notes/ Comments

Adapted from Middle Cities Education Association (Lezotte, Jacoby, 1990)

Year ________

CRITICAL WORK ACTIVITIES

Goal Area ____________________________

I. Objective Statement:
(What do you want to achieve?)

II. Strategies:
(How are you going to do it?)

	WHAT (Describe activity)	WHO (List who is responsible)	WHEN (When will activity take place?)
A			
B			
C			

III. Criteria for success:
(How will you know you have achieved this objective?)

EVIDENCE	TOOL TO BE USED	TIME LINE

Adapted from Anderson Middle School, Berkley, Michigan (Lezotte, Jacoby, 1990)

Year ______

Goal ______________________________

Evidence of Need ______________________________

Instructional Objective ______________________________

Evidence of Success ______________________________

Strategies	Person Responsible for Implementing Strategy	Person Responsible for Measuring Progress of the Strategy	Resources Needed	Dates of Activity		Assessment Date (When is progress to be measured?)	Criteria for Objective Attainment & How Meaured (How will we know the objective was attained?)
				Start	End		
1)							
2)							
3)							

Adapted from Williamston Community Schools, Williamston, Michigan (Lezotte, Jacoby, 1990)

SAMPLE

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Priority Needs: Academic Achievement

Goal: To improve student performance in basic skill areas

Objective: By the end of the 1988-89 school year, 95% of all students will demonstrate mastery on the written composition test.

ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	STAFF	TIMELINE	EVIDENCE
I. Provide staff development in the writing process				
A. Inservice workshop: the writing process 1. Identify local staff to provide inservice 2. Attend relevant workshops (trainer/trainees) 3. Develop workshop 4. Conduct workshop	Writing workshop; teachers; administrative staff	Administrators; teachers	August, 1988	Workshop scheduled and conducted
B. Communicate expectations 1. Specify desired outcomes 2. Develop media 3. Disseminate information	Staff time; media materials; local distribution system	Leadership team	August, 1988	Students, teachers, parents can specify desired outcomes
C. Develop follow-up plan 1. Identify staff responsible 2. Identify time frames 3. Identify needs assessment procedures 4. Provide follow-up	School calendar; staff time	Leadership team; supervisors; teachers	on-going	Follow-up provided: written documentation Teachers implement process writing
D. Monitor implementation 1. Review lesson plans 2. Target informal and formal observations	Lesson plans; teacher appraisal records	Principal; other appraisers	on-going	Written documentation of lesson plans reviewed, observations made, etc. Teachers implement process writing

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Austin, Texas 78701

SAMPLE

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Priority Needs: Academic Achievement

Goal: To improve student performance in basic skill areas

Objective: By the end of the 1988-89 school year, 95% of all students will demonstrate mastery on the written composition test.

ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	STAFF	TIMELINE	EVIDENCE
II. Provide staff development in holistic scoring A. Provide initial workshop	Consultant; budget	All teachers and administrators	August,1988	Workshop scheduled and conducted
B. Provide follow-up 1. Identify committee to score samples of student writing 2. Establish procedures for scoring samples 3. Establish formats/procedures for providing feedback	Teachers; holistic scoring guidelines	Volunteers (teachers)	on-going	Writing samples reviewed and scored; feedback received; comparison of committee and teacher scoring on file
C. Monitor	Students' writing samples	Principal; supervisor	on-going	Samples of appropriately scored writing samples on file
III. Evaluate	Test results	Leadership team	May, 1989	Test results reviewed and disseminated

SAMPLE

Campus Improvement Plan Evaluation Form

FACTOR	EVIDENCE	CHECK ONE		ACTION/REVISION/RECOMMENDATION
		Continue	Modify	
The desired outcome is clearly and frequently communicated.	Signs in the hallways, articles in the school newsletter, memos to teachers - all include a statement of the goal to achieve 100% mastery of the written composition test.	X		
Everyone involved has a clear understanding of the goals and activities which make up the plan.	All teachers have posters describing the writing process, the modes of writing, etc. on display. Students can repeat the goal when asked. Observations indicate that writing activities are occurring on a daily basis.	X		
Adequate resources (time, money, materials) are available and provided.	Lesson plans indicate that sufficient time is being allocated to composition. Informal and formal observations provide confirmation.	X		
Staff needs are assessed and addressed as the change is implemented.	The project is discussed at bi-monthly faculty meetings. The district language arts supervisor is available to help teachers upon request. Seven teachers have requested and received such help.		X	The principal and two teachers have arranged to attend a two-day seminar on writing sponsored by ASCD. This team will then be available to provide additional assistance and peer coaching in the writing process.

Appendix B

Examples of Implementation Timelines

1990 LEAD Principal's Academy

BUILDING-BASED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
Planning and Implementation Schedule Guide

PLANNING SCHEDULE

MONTHS

9/90	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8/91
	ABCD	E	F	G		H	I		J	J	J	

ACTIVITIES

A. Discuss plan with superintendent/central office
B. Inform board of education (and get go-ahead, if needed)
C. Orient building (and district) staff
D. Select School Effectiveness Team (SET)
E. Define effectiveness, equity, and excellence student achievement objectives
F. Develop building planning and implementation handbook or guide
G. Get resource approval
H. Self-assessment data
I. Training of SET in data interpretation and planning
J. Completion of Plan

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

MONTHS

8/91	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7/92
	A	B	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	E	F	F	

ACTIVITIES

A. Re-orient staff to Building Based School Improvement
B. SET presentation of Plan to faculty
C. Faculty review and approval of Plan; organization of task forces
D. Implementation and monitoring of Plan
E. Repeat self-assessment data collection and report results
F. SET development of new plan

7/92 - 6/93 Repeat 1990-91 cycle

The following is an example of a timeline for implementing school improvement in the Michawaka School District

SCHOOL CITY OF MISHAWAKA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

School City of Mishawaka
School Improvement Plan

-- 1986-87 YEAR ONE --

September
- Data completed for each student for disaggregated analysis of test scores by September 26, in order to encode for standardized tests administered to selected grade levels in late September and early October.

October
- October 29, 1986 -- Staff Development Day with students dismissed.
- Staff surveys of effective schools characteristics conducted for each school and address by Dr. Lawrence Lezotte to entire professional staff.

November
- Assessment questionnaire completed by noncertified staff, selected parents, and selected students.

December
- Building-level improvment team formed in each school prior to December 19, and names reported to Superintendent.
- One member of each school-level improvement team designated by the team to be its representative to the system wide improvement team, and name reported to Superintendent by December 19.

January-February
- Orientatation and training of building-level improvement teams.
- Profile of each school developed based on surveys and standardized testing.
- District-level team meets to determine roles and responsibilities.

March
- Development of preliminary draft of school improvement plan for each school.
- March 27, 1987 -- Staff Development Day with students dismissed.
- Discussion of preliminary draft for school improvement in each school.

April
- Refinement of each building-level plan and discussion of possible action plans.
- District-level team meets to begin preliminary planning for updating district improvement plan for 1989-90 year.

May
- Each faculty reviews, revises, and approves final written school improvement plan for submittal to Superintendent on or prior to June 1, 1987. Each plan should include indicators for measuring outcomes, cost estimates, time required and/or staff development requests.
- District-level team meets to make final district improvement plan for Year Four, 1989-90.

June
- Each building submits its final plan to Superintendent for approval. Superintendent reviews and submits to the School Board, with accompanying summarized cost and time estimates, for its approval.

-- 1987-88 YEAR TWO --

- Implementation of year one building-level plan in individual buildings with continued support and encouragement from central office.
- Complete update of disaggregated analysis of standardized test scores.
- Continue utilizing district and building-level team to support implementation of building-level plans.
- Implement staff development programs necessary to support accomplishment of building-level plans.
- Continue curriculum cycle to develop aligned curriculum
- Utilize disaggregated analysis of test results to plot student achievement and monitor building growth toward equitable learning environment.
- Complete evaluation of building plan, analyze test results, and re-evaluate building-level needs assessment to develop updated building-level plans for the coming school year.
- Develop new building-level plan for approval by the Superintendent and Board of School Trustees for implementation during the school year 1988-89.

-- 1988-89 YEAR THREE --

- Implementaion of year two building-level plan in individual buildings with continued support and encouragement from central office.
- Complete update of disaggregated analysis of standardized test scores.
- Continue utilizing district and building-level teams to support implementation of building-level plans.
- Implement staff development programs necessary to support accomplishment of building-level plans.
- Continue curriculum cycle to develop aligned curriculum.
- Utilize disaggregated analysis of test results to plot student achievement and monitor building growth toward equitable learning invironment.
- Conduct new needs assessment, analyze test results, and evaluate results of building-level plan in order to generate data related to current school needs.
- Develop new building-level plan for approval by the Superintendent and Board of School Trustees for implementation during the school year 1989-90.

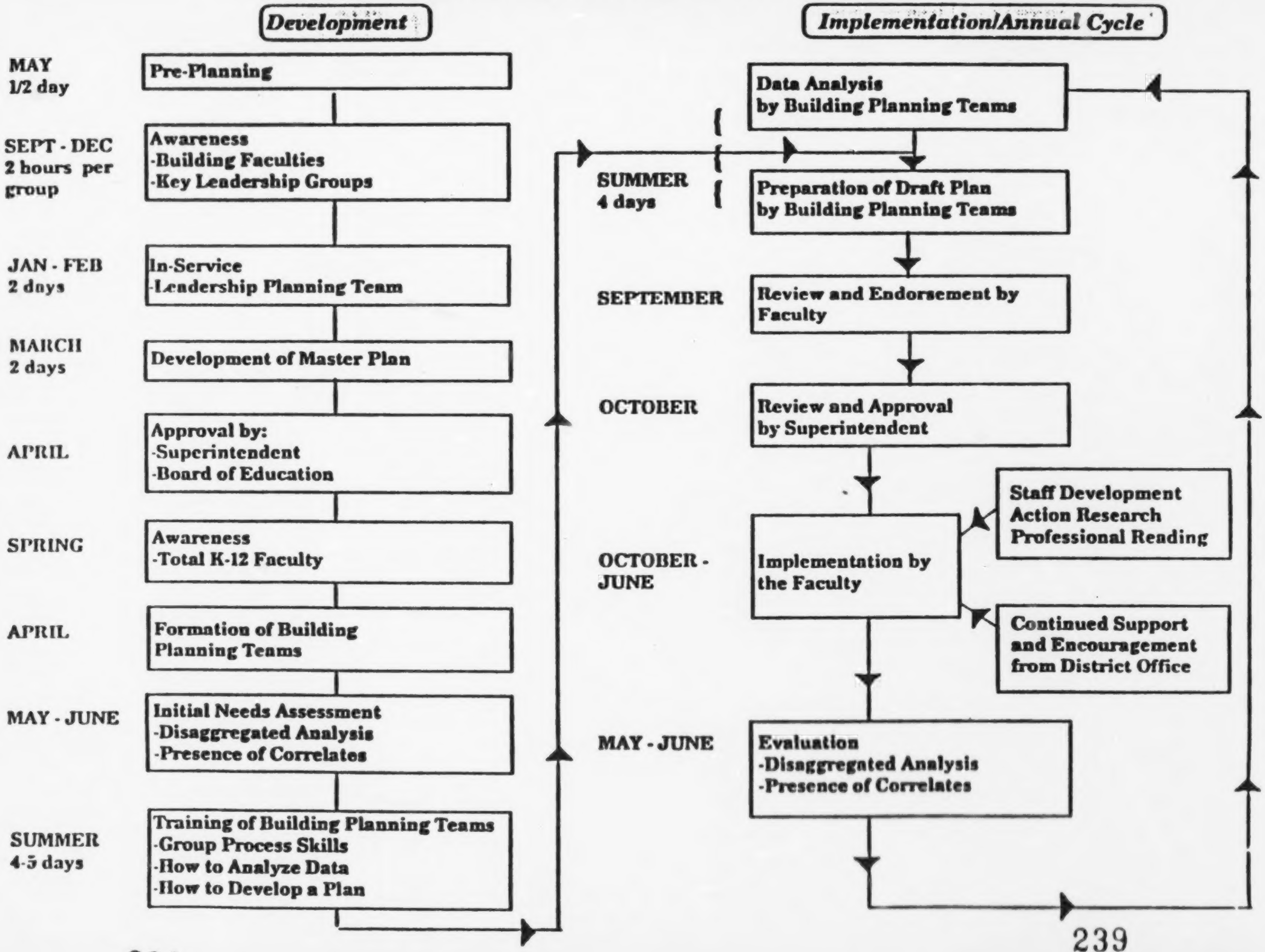
SCHOOL CITY OF MISHAWAKA
Mishawaka, Indiana

Suggested Time Line for Plan Development

April/May	Staff, Student, Parent, Community Awareness	
May	Form School Improvement Teams	
Summer 4–5 days	Training of School Improvement Teams	[may not be needed each year]
September/ November	Continue Total Staff Awareness Develop and Endorse Mission Statement	
November/ January	Collect, Examine and Disaggregate Learner Outcome Data	
January/ April	Determine and Prioritize Learner Outcomes Determine Presence of Correlates Select Improvement Goals and Strategies	
April/May	Submit Plan for Endorsement (staff, superintendent, school board, and community)	
May/June	Finalize Implementation Plan	
September/ May	Begin Implementation and Monitoring Re-examine Outcome Data and Correlate Data and Revise Goals and Strategies	

(Lezotte, Jacoby, 1990)

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT FLOWCHART


Development
MAY 1/2 day
Pre-Planning
SEPT - DEC 2 hours per group
Awareness -Building Faculties -Key Leadership Groups
JAN - FEB 2 days
In-Service -Leadership Planning Team
MARCH 2 days
Development of Master Plan
APRIL
Approval by: -Superintendent -Board of Education
SPRING
Awareness -Total K-12 Faculty
APRIL
Formation of Building Planning Teams
MAY - JUNE
Initial Needs Assessment -Disaggregated Analysis -Presence of Correlates
SUMMER 4-5 days
Training of Building Planning Teams -Group Process Skills -How to Analyze Data -How to Develop a Plan
Implementation/Annual Cycle
Data Analysis by Building Planning Teams
SUMMER 4 days
Preparation of Draft Plan by Building Planning Teams
SEPTEMBER
Review and Endorsement by Faculty
OCTOBER
Review and Approval by Superintendent
OCTOBER - JUNE
Implementation by the Faculty
Staff Development Action Research Professional Reading
Continued Support and Encouragement from District Office
MAY - JUNE
Evaluation -Disaggregated Analysis -Presence of Correlates

NARRATIVE 7

USING DATA IN THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

USING DATA IN THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

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Acknowledgements

Original text on utilization of data at the building and district level was outlined and written by Dr. Robert Sudlow, Dr. Bud Meyers and Dr. Joan Shoemaker. Dr. Sudlow is a member of the National Center for Effective Schools Cadre who serves as Assistant Superintendent for Instruction in Spencerport, NY. Bud Meyers, a Cadre member, is Associate Professor in the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont. Dr. Shoemaker is at the Connecticut State Department of Education, and is also a Cadre member.

Initial work on this narrative was begun under the direction of Larry Lezotte, Barbara Taylor and Lydia McCue while the Center for Effective Schools was located at Okemos, Michigan. Additional writing, editing and compiling was completed by Edie Holcomb, Associate Director, National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kent D. Peterson, Director.

Narrative 7

Using Data in the School Improvement Process

Goals and Objectives

GOALS:

(1) Participants will understand the importance of data to influence school improvement objectives.

(2) Participants will understand the importance of disaggregating data to meet the equity definition of an effective school.

(3) Participants will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize data to improve the quality and equity of student outcomes in their school.

OBJECTIVES:

(1) To describe district and building utilization of data that is consistent with a mission that all students can learn and a definition of school effectiveness in terms of quality and equity.

(2) To identify various processes which may be used to develop a database of quantitative and perceptual data.

(3) To describe processes for defining the evidence of effectiveness within a district and school.

(4) understand the rationale and process for disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender.

(5) To compare the characteristics of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced test data and their uses for school improvement based on Effective Schools Research.

(6) To identify various processes for gathering perceptual data regarding the presence of the characteristics of effective schools.

(7) To understand how data is used to identify improvement objectives at the school level.

(8) To identify procedures for reporting data on student performance and school characteristics.

Introduction

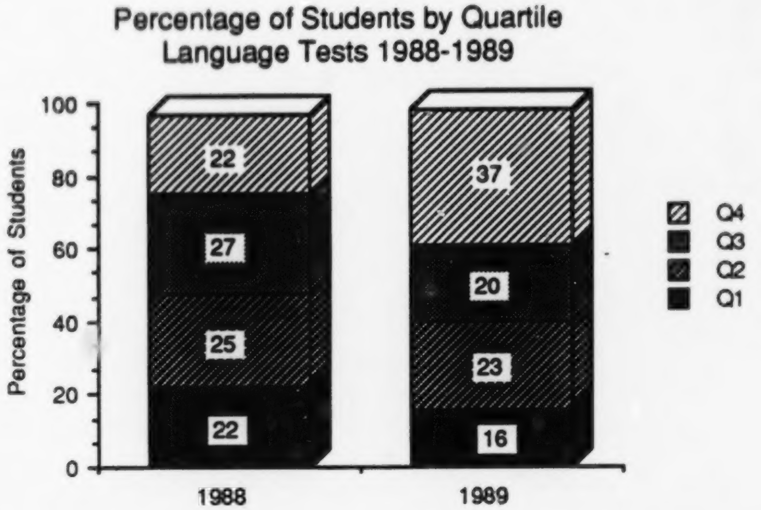
Practitioners of school improvement may be asked "Which of the following schools is implementing Effective Schools Research findings" (Sudlow, 1984, p. 1)?

1. Building A strives systematically to improve school climate.
2. Building B conducts inservice programs on the findings of teacher effectiveness research.
3. Building C is developing projects to install the six correlates of an effective school.
4. Building D is implementing a new math program characterized by extensive inservice education, collegial problem sharing and discussion, frequent monitoring of student progress, and periodic modification of instructional content and materials based upon pre-post test results.

Answer: None of the above and all of the above. No single activity constitutes a school improvement plan. Neither does one strong correlate or attention to one correlate describe an effective school. But a long-range school improvement plan may contain all of the above efforts as strategies to fulfill mission-oriented, data-driven improvement objectives.

Some practitioners who have worked extensively with school effectiveness teams define an effective school by the criterion of 95% of students achieving minimal academic mastery. They emphasize that demonstration of equitable effectiveness requires disaggregating the data to ensure that the number of students achieving 95% mastery is proportional for all sub-groups, regardless of socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity or gender. The indicators that define "minimal academic mastery" are set by the individual school or district, based on their curriculum design and testing program. Minimal academic mastery may mean a percentage on a standardized test, a certain number of instructional objectives met, or other criteria as locally determined.

Other trainers and facilitators recommend showing student performance as a distribution of scores by quartiles. This would illustrate what proportion of students scored between 0 and the 25th percentile, between the 26th and 50th, etc. Bar graphs of this type make it easy to compare the relative achievement of the total population and subgroups.



The purpose of this narrative is to enable district steering committees and school improvement teams to gather, analyze and interpret data as the basis for identifying improvement objectives and strategies.

Why is School Improvement Described as a Research-Based, Data-Driven Process?

John Goodlad observes in A Place Called School (1984) that schools rarely have the kind of information they need to know to change. They lack data in such areas as the school's functions, the relevance of instruction to community needs, the distribution of resources across learning areas, equity of access to knowledge for different students and allocation of instructional time. He points out with regret that many schools who feel they are doing a good job already are disinclined to examine such issues.

In the school improvement process based on Effective Schools Research, one of the first tasks is to raise such questions. These questions obviate the need for quantitative data to use in answering them. Further questions will develop naturally as discrepancies are noted between conditions as they currently exist and the way staff believe conditions can and should be. Specifically, after a staff determine its mission and beliefs, the school improvement team leads them through a process of examining data and planning how to close any discrepancy gaps that may exist.

What Kinds of Data should be Gathered?

The original Effective Schools Research identified a set of characteristics (correlates) that were more clearly present in schools where achievement was high for all subgroups of the student population. These correlates became the exclusive focus of early school improvement efforts. However, experience indicated that improving such aspects of the school organization did not always have an impact on the degree to which students were learning. The current emphasis is therefore to gather data on BOTH student performance and school characteristics.

What are Possible Sources of Student Performance Data Available to Schools and Districts?

A basic assumption of Effective Schools Research is that schools must be effective in terms of both quality and equity. Since the primary purpose of schooling is teaching for learning, proof that a school is effective must be stated in terms of student achievement and other student outcomes. This baseline data provides the benchmark by which the school can judge the impact of its improvement efforts. Two of the most commonly used sources of data are norm-referenced standardized tests and criterion-referenced tests. Edmonds (1984) points out the weaknesses inherent in sole reliance on the former.

> Norm-referenced, standardized achievement testing constitutes a formidable obstacle to resolution of the issues associated with greater achievement for low-income students. First, the tests measure students in relation to each other and, therefore, do not produce results that establish confidently whether or not individual minimum academic mastery has occurred. Norm-referenced tests are better measures of groups than of individuals. Second, mean or average aggregate school scores obscure whether and to what extent all students are progressing as they ought or might. If middle class students in a school score sufficiently highly on a norm-referenced test, the resultant mean or average might appear deceptively high, even though the school's lower class students uniformly fail to demonstrate adequate progress. The public would therefore lack a proper basis for judging whether or not the schools are doing what they should.

Norm-referenced tests also provide little information which a school staff or teacher can use to improve the instructional program. Often they do not measure the curriculum which the educational programs are designed to teach. Further, because "... one objective of norm-referenced tests is to differentiate between the 'best' and the 'worst' students, writers of norm-referenced tests tend to exclude questions which measure the common skills most students have learned" (Brookover, Beamer, Efthim, Lezotte, Miller, Passalacqua, and Tornazky, 1982, p. 249).

Norm-referenced tests, however, are useful as a general assessment of a school in comparison to the nation, if the test measures the content the school values and teaches. Hence, norm-referenced tests are widely used, despite their limitations.

A desirable source of data is:

> curriculum-based, criterion-referenced, standardized measures of pupil progress. Criterion-referenced tests are grounded in an agreement as to the individual level of performance that constitutes minimum mastery. The resulting scores thus have at least two psychometric advantages over normative measures. Students may be characterized as having passed or failed the test independent of the performance of their peers, and the proportion of pupils demonstrating mastery may thus be discerned, establishing whether and to what extent satisfactory progress extends to all the social classes or races in a school. Teachers thus measure themselves and their school by noting over time the proportion of pupils demonstrating at least minimum mastery. Such an approach to testing and measurement is especially important for low-income students in that parents are given a relatively unambiguous basis for judging the schools of their children.
>
> ... Schools cannot be judged effective if a significant portion of the pupil population fails to demonstrate mastery. Thus, any school attempting to exploit the research is compelled to use psychometric practices that have certain properties associated with criterion-referenced testing (Edmonds, 1984, p. 38-39).

For the above reasons, it is strongly recommended that criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests be used together to measure pupil acquisition of skills, knowledge and concepts (Levine & Lezotte, 1990). If a school district does not have a criterion-referenced testing system, then it should use its current tests (probably norm-referenced) until it develops and implements the more accurate measures.

A current measure used in assessing achievement is referred to as authentic assessment. Authentic assessment is a useful tool that gives educators more information on what students know and in what direction the educator should most effectively move toward meeting the students needs. Archbald and Newmann (1988) write that, "a valid assessment system provides information about the particular tasks on which student's succeed or fail, but more important, it also presents tasks that are worthwhile, significant and meaningful--in short, *authentic*" (p.1).

Performance assessment, work-related application and a portfolio of mastery of a student's work can be obtained through a collection of written work (journals, essays, diaries), exhibitions (research, oral and artistic presentations), critical thinking and problem solving (Wiggins, 1989).

Archival data should also be analyzed. Information on student attendance rates and truancy, drop-out vs. graduation rates, grades and grading policies, and discipline referrals can be helpful. The types of data to be used will depend on the content of the district's mission statement and school beliefs. All values that are held strongly should be reflected in the collection and analysis of data.

What Criteria for Student Performance is Needed?

Minimum academic mastery is the "early acquisition of those basic school skills that assure pupils successful access to the next level of schooling" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 15).

Successful access to the next level of schooling means that a pupil has been prepared so that he or she can choose what course he or she will take next year. In other words, the option to take ninth grade algebra is not precluded because a pupil has not been taught the necessary prerequisite skills, knowledge and concepts. This means that there must be coordination and alignment of the curriculum across grade levels (as well as within grade levels).

In order for there to be coordination and alignment of the curriculum across grade levels, teachers should specifically identify the exact skills, knowledge and concepts a student needs in order to be successful. Enrollment in ninth grade algebra is a crucial curricular decision which will greatly affect a student's available choices both for the remainder of his or her school career and his or her life afterwards. If the instructional process in kindergarten through eighth grade does not prepare students to have the true choice of whether or not to take ninth grade algebra, it should be restructured to make this choice possible.

How Should Student Achievement Data be Analyzed and Interpreted at the District and Building Level?

The purpose of analyzing student achievement data is to determine if there is a match between the school's intended and actual outcomes. Specific procedures for analyzing and interpreting student performance data and data on school characteristics are described in later sections of this narrative. The important concept to be noted here is the difference between what occurs at the district level and school level. The district steering committee will analyze data on the entire student population of the district. The results they report will be used as a reference point for each individual school's analysis. The focus at the building level is on the performance of that specific student group. As mentioned in Narrative 5 and 6, comparisons should be made only between the building data and the overall district data, or between the results of analysis longitudinally across several years of building level data. Building-by-building comparisons should not be made when attendance areas are not identical. The commonality between analysis of data at the district and school level is that data at both levels must be disaggregated to determine the performance of subgroups, i.e., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender.

What Procedures Can be Used to Disaggregate Data?

Procedures for disaggregating data have varied from school to school, and district to district. Factors which influenced whether disaggregation was actually done or not, and by what process, included:

1. Timing -- how early in the Effective Schools movement a group became involved;
2. Commitment -- how deeply the mission of quality with equity was embedded in the belief system; and
3. Technology -- how advanced the school or district was with computer applications for organizational use.

Schools which began their school improvement efforts in the early 1980s were often working on their own, with inadequate central office assistance and minimal external assistance. The implementation of technology at that time probably extended to classroom use of basic skill drill and simulations, but hardware and software for administration and management were less available. Particularly scarce were data management packages that could be used on personal computers at the building level. As a result, early school improvement teams relied almost solely on the level of commitment to their mission to motivate them to disaggregate data and compare the performance of subgroups of their student population by hand. The manual process they used involved:

1. Gathering the print-outs of test scores on the standardized instrument currently used in the district (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, California Achievement Test, etc.).
2. Gathering the print-outs of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.[1]
3. Drawing a grid with two columns and four rows.
4. Labelling the columns to identify those who did qualify (regarded as lower socioeconomic status) and those who did not apply or qualify (regarded as middle and/or upper SES).
5. Labelling the four rows to represent the four quartiles of student scores -- Quartile 1 for scores in the 1st-25th percentiles; Quartile 2 for the 26th-50th

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[1] Parents' level of education (Frederickson & Edmonds, 1978) is also an indicator often used to identify socio-economic status. Some districts gather this information through the school census or on registration or enrollment forms.

percentiles; Quartile 3 for the 51st-75th percentiles; and Quartile 4 for the 76th percentile and up.

6. Identifying a student's score on the subtest being analyzed and disaggregated (e.g., reading composite, math composite, or reading comprehension and math problem-solving) and looking for that student's name on the free/reduced lunch list.

	Qualifies for free or reduced lunch (Low SES)	Does not qualify (Middle/upper SES)
Q4--76th to 100th percentile		
Q3--51st to 75th percentile		
Q2--26th to 50th percentile		
Q1--to 25th percentile		

7. Putting a mark in the appropriate row and column on the grid -- A score in the 88th percentile for a student who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch would be put in the top cell on the middle/upper SES side of the grid. A student in the 88th percentile who did qualify for free or reduced lunch would be marked in the top cell on the lower SES side of the grid.

8. Calculating the percentage of students in each of the eight cells and comparing the distribution of scores for students identified as lower SES and middle/upper SES to determine whether equity in achievement could be demonstrated.

This process had to be repeated for each grade level on which test information was available, and for each subject/course the school improvement team identified as important to study. Similar steps had to be repeated in order to disaggregate by race/ethnicity. It was time-consuming, but principals and teams who really wanted to know what was happening with their students courageously attacked it. As they worked, many found the results interesting enough to motivate them to continue.

This description of the manual process of disaggregation was included to provide the conceptual understanding of what disaggregation really IS, and to inspire appreciation for the technological procedures that are now available in a large proportion of schools and districts. Various hardware/software packages are being used. In Norfolk, Virginia, for example, all norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests are administered on "bubble sheets". These forms are scanned into central computers at the district office. Student Outcome data is disaggregated by socioeconomic status, gender, and race. The software they use to conduct the analysis was custom made for their computing system.

In Bath, New York, the Steuben-Allegheny Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) utilizes the spreadsheet application Lotus 1.2.3 for dissagregation of student data by socioeconomic status and by gender. Among the elements analyzed are norm-referenced tests such as CTBS, ITBS and CAT, state-mandated criterion-referenced tests, and some SAT and ACT scores.

The National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development is developing a Management Information System for Effective Schools (MISES). Its capabilities will include a student database, a teacher database, the report-writing and editing software to convert data to useful formats, and a user-friendly statistical analysis program. 1990-91 and 1991-92 are the scheduled development years for the project. (NCESRD may be contacted early in 1992 for information on availability.)

Now that data analysis has been simplified by the use of technology, additional characteristics may be considered. A very important one is the distribution of scores throughout the quartiles, even if the school population is homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. For example, if the lowest quartile contains more than the expected 25% of the students' scores, this school has a problem in terms of quality outcomes regardless of how many higher scores there may be in other quartiles. Schools in communities where the external factors of socioeconomic status, family structure, etc., are advantageous, should challenge themselves to demonstrate their effectiveness in better-than-expected outcomes.

An additional factor of increasing significance in data disaggregation is the criterion of gender, particularly for achievement in mathematics and sciences. A recent study by the American Association of University Women Leadership News, (Jan. 15, 1991) indicates that gender bias is undermining educational improvement, and furthermore, that lack of interest in math and science is linked to a lag in self-esteem. Since skills in these disciplines are increasingly crucial to higher education and professional careers, school improvement teams need to examine the comparative enrollment and achievement of males and females in these courses.

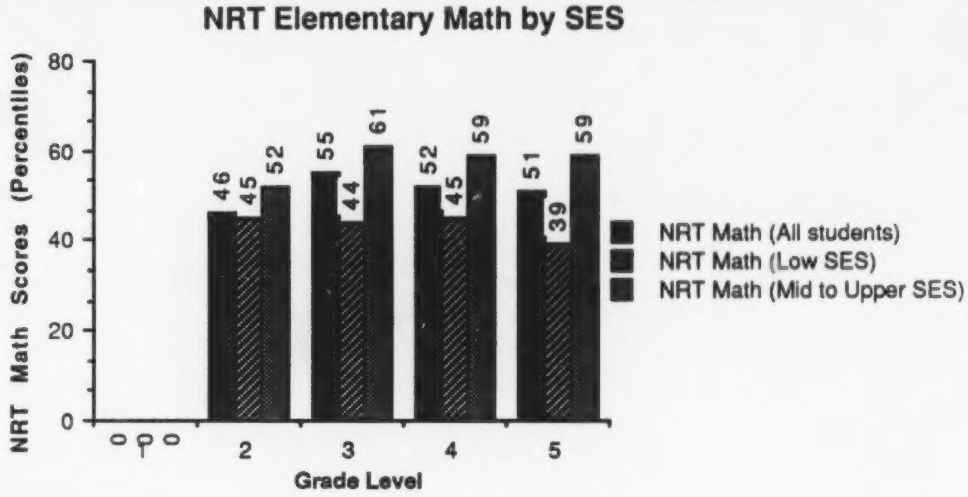
Disaggregating student data has other purposes in addition to analyzing current student performance. When data is available for a period of several years, it can be useful to monitor trends in achievement as the composition of the school population changes.

Disaggregation is also a simple, effective tool for action research. It can answer such questions as:

1 Does student achievement differ according to gender, race, and/or ethnicity?
2. Do patterns of grading differ according to social class, ethnicity, race and/or gender?
3 Do patterns of course selections (i.e., which students take which courses?) differ?

How Should Student Performance Data be Reported?

In most states, school districts are required to report performance on an annual basis. This reporting should be for the student population of the district as a whole. Individual schools should work with building-level data. The results of the data analysis should be included as a school status report in the school improvement plan. The most useful format is a set of charts or graphs, with short narratives of 2-3 sentences in length summarizing each one. The summaries should include statements of strength as well as concerns. For example:



Strengths:

1. The means of math scores for all students in grades 3, 4 and 5 are above the 50th percentile.
2. The mean math scores for middle and upper SES students are above the 50th percentile at all grade levels.

Concerns:

1. The mean for all 2nd grade students is below the 50th percentile.
2. At all grade levels, lower SES students score below middle and upper SES students. The discrepancy ranges from 7 percentiles on the 2nd grade test to 20 percentiles on the 5th grade test.
3. It appears from this data that lower SES students fall further behind in math as they progress through the grades.

The school improvement process looks for areas that need improving. Implicit in this process is the confidence that planned changes will improve student achievement. The Anoka-Hennepin guide for writing a school plan suggests that building school improvement teams should seek out not only the 'weaknesses' or areas that need improvement, but describe those areas in which the school is doing well. Schools should celebrate their successes to motivate continued effort.

What are Possible Sources of Data on School Characteristics?

It is important to recall that the original Effective Schools Research identified a set of characteristics known as correlates of effective schools:

1. Clear and focused mission;
2. High expectations for student success;
3. Safe and orderly environment;

4. Strong Instructional Leadership;
5. Opportunity to learn and time on task;
6. Positive home-school relations; and
7. Frequent monitoring of student progress.

The term correlates is a research term that indicates that these factors do not prove cause and effect, but rather a relationship between and among different aspects of the school organization. This means that there is a relationship between the degree of presence of the characteristics of effective schools and desired student achievement outcomes. It is therefore highly probable, though not guaranteed, that strengthening these characteristics will have an indirect, positive effect on student learning.

The correlates of effective schools are most often measured by a paper and pencil instrument which gathers perceptual data. Some of the most frequently used and reliable surveys of school characteristics are listed in Appendix A at the end of this narrative.

These surveys are typically administered to staff, students and parents. For most schools, all staff members will complete a survey, but only a sample of responses from parents may be sought in order to make the amount of data more manageable. At the secondary level, it is also helpful to gather student perceptions of the school as an organization.

In addition to the survey approach, perceptual data can be gathered through interviews, by asking for the observations of visiting teams of educators, and through processes already in place as components of self-studies, e.g., accreditation monitoring.

Archival data can also be used for analysis of the school organization. Sources may include staff and student handbooks, district curriculum guides, and grouping policies and practices. Analysis of archival data may be part of the school improvement team's initial plan for data gathering, or may be gathered to give further information on areas identified as potential problems in the surveys.

How Should School Characteristics be Analyzed and Interpreted at the Building Level?

The purpose of data collection and analysis on school characteristics is to obtain the opinions of all people involved in the school. The survey and/or interview items are drawn from current research on the characteristics of effective schools. One of the factors a school should consider in selecting a survey is whether purchase of the instrument includes processing the responses, and/or whether the district has the personnel and software to compile and analyze the data. Responses enable the school improvement team to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organization that enhance or hinder teachers' ability to teach and students' to learn. It is important to remember that survey data reflect perceptions, not proof, of reality in the school.

When there is a difference between the perceived and the real, people act from their perceptions. It is therefore important not to disregard perceptions that may be considered inaccurate, but to decide why they may be unclear and how best to communicate and clarify those perceptions.

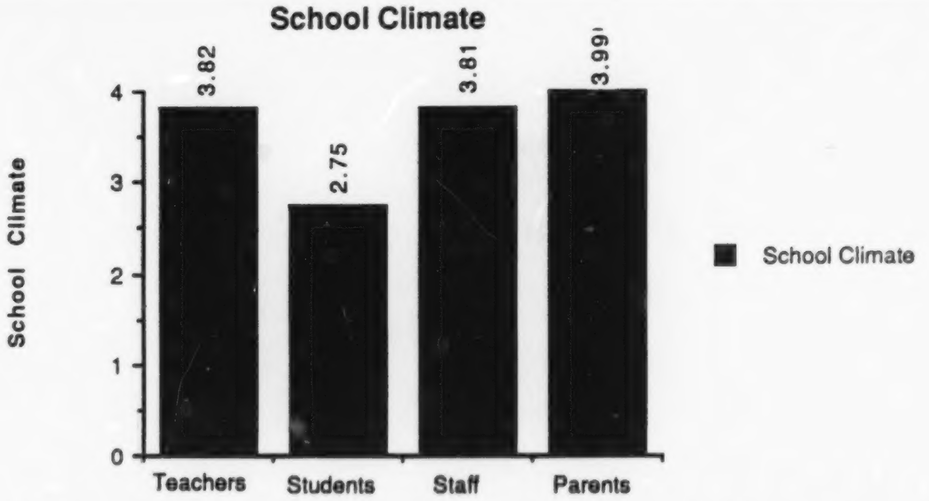
Interpreting the data on school characteristics should include three perspectives:

1. Which school characteristics appear to be of most concern to all groups of respondents? If one characteristic is rated as weak by staff, parents and students, it most certainly needs further examination.
2. Which school characteristics appear to have most divergence between groups of respondents? If staff feel that a characteristic is very strong in the school, but parents and students do not view it that way, further information needs to be gathered. This could include checking with members of each group to see what they thought those survey questions meant, or what they would consider the ideal condition to be. Clarifying communication might indicate that this is not a problem area. On the other hand, it might reveal conflicts of expectation that need to be resolved.

3. Which school characteristics need (or can receive) most immediate change? Because success motivates further effort, any changes that can be made fairly quickly and easily show that the data is being used and acted upon. This encourages further participation in the process, and greater commitment to more extensive and long-ranging changes that may need to be made in response to the first two questions.

How Should Data on School Characteristics be Reported?

As with the analysis of student outcome data, results of surveys and interviews are most easily understood if they are portrayed in graphs and shared with staff for agreement and a priority listing of concerns. From all the data, staff should select information that is most essential to portray discrepancies in perception between groups (e.g., faculty vs. student perceptions) or between what is perceived and what is desirable. Each graph should show the responses of all groups--staff, parents/community members and students--regarding that correlate. The graphs should be accompanied by two or three sentences summarizing the strengths and concerns revealed in the data.



Strength: On a scale of one to four, with four indicating the highest degree of satisfaction, it appears that teachers, staff and parents all have relatively high regard for the school climate.

Concern: The mean of student ratings of school climate falls more than one full point below ratings given by adults. Students are less satisfied with the school climate than teachers, other staff and parents.

The school improvement team may also wish to gather further input from small groups of parents, or gather additional archival data as mentioned earlier. The identification of general areas of greatest concern is done with input from a larger group, but the school improvement team will work out the actual wording of specific improvement objectives that arise from those discussions on the data.

How is Data Used to Identify Improvement Objectives?

An important role of the school improvement team is to guide staff through a prioritizing and decision-making process so they can select 2-3 improvement objectives from the mass of data available (see Training Sessions 6 and 7). It is at this point, after the data have been collected, disaggregated, and analyzed, that school improvement objectives are determined. Since the primary evidence of school improvement is based on improved student outcomes, the improvement objectives are determined by carefully considering three criteria:

1. The stated purpose or mission which expresses the core values of the school;
2. A careful analysis of the current student outcome data to determine strengths and weaknesses; and
3. A careful analysis of the strength or weakness, presence or absence, of the characteristics of effective schools.

The first step in formulating an improvement objective is to determine where a problem may exist. To make this determination, it is necessary for the team to examine the disaggregated data and list specific observable evidence of concern. The problem should be stated in a declarative sentence:

- Thirty-seven percent of the boys in the fourth grade mastered the fourth grade minimal skills in mathematics as measured by the district's criterion-referenced test.
- Over the past three years, at least fifty percent of our graduating seniors have answered correctly 40 percent of the inferential comprehension questions on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

This problem statement is phrased to answer the following three questions:

1. Is there a problem?
2. Why might the problem exist? Look for school-based causes or sources.
3. What are the consequences or effects of the problem? Who is affected and to what extent?

Here are five examples of such a sequence:

1. Evidence -- There are a sizable number of students who frequently are disruptive in the hallways.

   School-Based Source -- This is caused by inconsistency in enforcement of discipline.

   Consequences -- This results in loss of teaching/learning time, heightened frustration of staff and students and lower school morale.

2. Evidence -- Individual and department goals differ throughout the school.

School-Based Source -- There is no Jr. Sr. High Mission Statement.

Consequences -- This results in a lack of unified instructional processes, confusion and conflict over specific outcomes for students, lower morale, and confusion over the decision-making process.

3. Evidence -- When compared to the rest of the student population, lower SES and minority students do not perform as well. Three facts which support this evidence are that lower SES and minority students have: (1) a lower percentage enrolled in the regents program, (2) a higher percentage of failures (F grades), and (3) lower scores on standardized tests.

   School-Based Source -- A significant difference between teachers' perceptions of lower SES and minority students and the actual performance of these students.

   Consequences -- This results in a group of students who suffer from a lower self-esteem, an inequitable educational opportunity, and an inability to reach their full potential.

4. Evidence -- Classes are often disrupted by late arrivals, students being called out of class, field trips, fire drills, assemblies, meetings, etc.

   School-Based Source -- There is no written policy on the preservation of instructional time.

   Consequences -- This results in frustration on the part of both staff and students, less instructional time, lower achievement levels, misplaced student priorities, and classroom management problems.

5. Evidence -- There is a lack of consistency regarding what is expected of students, teachers and parents.

   School-Based Source -- There is no written homework policy.

Consequences -- This results in confusion and misunderstanding for students, teachers and parents which causes friction, lack of student responsibility, and creates a poor public image in the community.

Data from the analysis of school characteristics may be included in this process in two ways. The data may give rise to problem statements that relate directly to a concern about a school characteristic which might become an improvement objective. However, the majority of the improvement objectives should deal directly with student outcomes.

An alternate way to use data about school characteristics is to provide indications of the school-based sources or causes contributing to a problem area. When this second approach is taken, efforts to improve the school characteristic (or correlate) are part of the strategies to meet the objective. In this way, factors such as school climate are addressed, but are seen as factors that enhance or impede student progress, not as ends in themselves. For example, if the data and discussion of concerns indicates a belief that there are too many classroom interruptions, the issue becomes a matter of time-on-task. Increasing time-on-task would then be one of the strategies to implement to pursue the improvement objective. For example:

Objective: By the last week in May, 1992, 75% of the boys in the fourth grade will have mastered the fourth grade minimal skills in mathematics as measured by the district's criterion-referenced tests.

Strategy #1: Mathematics will be taught by each elementary teacher for the first 35 minutes of instructional time each morning. During this time, there will be no classroom interruptions except for emergencies.

Strategy #2: A plan will be developed to provide after-school supplemental mathematics study sessions by a team of senior high tutors.

The development of strategies is described in Narrative 6--Implementing School Improvement at the Building Level. It must be emphasized that at this stage of identifying improvement objectives, the staff and team must not leap too quickly to what should be implemented or done about it. Premature discussion of strategies tends to distract attention from the essential focus on improvement objectives.

It is vital to continue staff involvement at this part of the process. Problem statements should be shared with the entire faculty. Questions and comments could be shared through direct dialogue or by responding on a printed form. The team would then lead the faculty through a process of brainstorming and consensus building in order to narrow the list of problem statements to a manageable number. It is suggested that five be a maximum for further discussion and exploration as potential improvement objectives.

The following steps may be useful as a group process activity to prioritize problem statements:

1. The team identifies at least three problem areas and describes the data and implications.
2. Each staff member chooses three questions which are priority concerns.
3. A recorder lists the priority concerns on chart paper.
4. The group discusses all of the concerns as listed. People may begin to change their minds on priorities as the discussion occurs.
5. Each group member identifies a first, second and third priority concern.
6. Using consensus building skills, the team guides the staff to consensus regarding the top three priority concerns.

It is essential that the strengths revealed in the data also be emphasized at this time. It would be highly unusual if the data analysis did not uncover numerous areas in which student outcomes are strong. Be sure to publicize and celebrate these successes! Staff members need to know and savor the strengths of the building as well as plan for overcoming identified areas of weakness.

The next step is for the school improvement team to take each of the priority problem statements and write it as an improvement objective. Because it is a basic belief of the Effective Schools Research that the primary evidence of school success is improved student outcomes, the improvement objectives should be written in terms of measurable student outcomes. Some of the improvement objectives will be long-term in nature (3-5 years) and some will be short (3-9 months).

> **Problem Statement:** 37% of the boys in the fourth grade mastered the fourth grade minimal skills in mathematics as measured by the district's criterion-referenced test.
>
> **Problem Statement converted to a School Improvement Objective:** By the last week in May, 1992, 75% of the boys in the fourth grade will have mastered the fourth grade minimal skills in mathematics as measured by the district's criterion-referenced test.

The following questions may be helpful in assessing how well the objective is phrased in terms of accuracy and impact:

1. Does the objective accurately reflect the problem statement?
2. Does the objective clearly and concisely state what is to be accomplished?
3. Is the objective measurable in terms of student performance? Is there an indication of the preferred measure(s) to be used?
4. Is the objective achievable within a stated period of time?
5. Is the degree or amount of expected improvement clearly indicated?

A well-written improvement objective will communicate the same intended outcome to everyone who reads it. To assure that the objective is clear, six components should be present:

1. WHO -- identifies the persons to perform an activity (e.g., all of the students, 80% of the students);
2. DOES WHAT -- the specific area of performance and activity (e.g., will be able to correctly name ten objects in Spanish; will visit their child's classroom);
3. WHEN -- the specific point in time when the performance will be complete (e.g., at the completion of the six-week instructional unit; once per month);
4. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS -- program provisions (e.g., in the special bilingual-bicultural program; of Head Start children);
5. HOW MUCH -- the minimum level to be achieved (e.g., 20 of the 25 fruits and vegetables identified; demonstrated at least twice); and

6. HOW MEASURED -- assessment techniques and methods (e.g., Students respond orally to the teacher individually who notes correct/incorrect responses; as evidenced by the visitor's sign-up sheet in the office.

The following examples include all of the above components:

1. At the completion of the six-week instructional unit, all of the students in the special bilingual-bicultural program will be able to correctly name in Spanish 20 of the 25 fruits and vegetables. Each student will respond individually to the teacher who will note correct and incorrect responses.
2. Eighty percent of the parents of Head Start children will visit their child's classroom at least twice each month as evidenced by the visitor's sign-up sheet available in the office.
3. At the completion of the sixth grade, eighty percent of the students in the special reading program will be able to read with ninety percent comprehension a selected passage as measured by a district-prepared test.

Identification of data-driven, mission-oriented improvement objectives is the key to an effective school improvement effort. The objectives must not only be accurate, they must be those of greatest importance, and it must be possible to monitor and show evidence of progress in order to maintain teacher commitment and motivation to the cause. This is particularly true the first year.

- Select at least one improvement objective that can demonstrate change within one year.
- Early improvement objectives should be very visible efforts so progress is easy to demonstrate.
- Be sure the improvement objective is clearly linked to data which were high priority concerns of the entire staff.

How Should Data be Used on an Ongoing Basis to Refine and Renew the School Improvement Process?

Student performance data should be analyzed on an annual basis if the district or school does yearly testing. School characteristics should be studied about once every three years so that perceptions have time to change and the questions don't lead the respondent to a recently remembered "right" answer.

As newer data are gathered and analyzed, they should be added to the ongoing, longitudinal database being compiled at the district and building levels. School leaders should constantly monitor trends, as compared to the "snapshot" approach of only considering results by one group of students at one point in time.

In addition to this technical aspect of ongoing data monitoring, there is an equally important symbolic aspect. Consistent attention to student outcomes by school improvement teams and staffs symbolizes their commitment to the school's mission and their willingness to accept responsibility for student learning. As the conventional wisdom expresses it, "What gets measured, gets done."

Ongoing use of data also provides the information and opportunity for symbolically powerful celebrations of success. Seeing the results of past efforts is one of the most effective ways to build intrinsic motivation for further endeavors.

School improvement is hard work and the reward system is primarily intangible. The opportunity to see changes in the students we serve validates more than the school improvement process, even more than the school mission--it validates that long-ago decision to invest a career lifetime in the education of all America's children.

APPENDIX A

Instruments Used to Assess the Relative Presence of School Characteristics

Connecticut School Effectiveness Interview
Contact Joan Shoemaker (203) 638-4205
- Elementary version, 1981
- Junior High version (Cosgrove) version, 1987
- Senior High (Wilson) version, 1987
- Handbook on the Connecticut School Effectiveness Interview and Questionnaire, 1984

Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
Contact Joan Shoemaker (203) 638 - 4205
- Elementary version, 1981
- Secondary version, Form 2, 1983
- Student version, Form A, 1986
- Student version, Form B, 1986
- Parent version, 1985
- Technical Manual: Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness
- Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire: Negatively Worded Items
- Connecticut Secondary School Development Questionnaire, Form 2: Negatively Worded Items

Glendale Effective School Assessment Instrument
Contact Mark Becker (602) 435-6052
- Teacher version, 1985
- Staff version, 1985
- Student version, 1985
- Conditions and Suggestions for the Use of the Glendale Instrument

San Diego County Office of Education Effective Schools Survey
Contact Janet Chrispeels (619) 292-3620
- School Personnel
  - Elementary Form, 1986
  - Middle/Junior High School From, 1986
  - High School Form, 1986
- Students, 1986
- Parents, 1986
- Staff Interview, undated
- Scoring Keys
- Developing Reliable and Valid Effective Schools Assessment Instruments

University of Washington School Self Assessment Service
Contact Jerry Bamburg (206) 543-1891
- School Assessment Instrument
  - Staff
  - Students
  - Parents

The Effective School Battery
Contact Gary D. Gottfredson (813) 968-9003
Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
Student Survey, 1984
Teacher Survey, 1984

School Improvement Program Questionnaire
Contact Anna Dodson, Director (703) 441-2319
Research, Testing and Statistics
Norfolk Public Schools
Teacher Questionnaire, 1984
Special Program/Resource Teacher Questionnaire, 1984
Elementary Principal Questionnaire, 1984

Effective Schools Teacher Questionnaire
Contact Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction (717) 787-8913
Pennsylvania State Department of Education

How Effective is Your School? A Checklist
Contact Council for Basic Education (202) 347-4171

Questionnaire for Assessing School and Classroom Effectiveness
Contact Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (703) 549-9190
Printed in Effective Schools and Classrooms: A Research-Based Perspective, 1984

School Assessment Survey
Contact Bruce Wilson, William Firestone, Robert Herriott
Research for Better Schools, Inc. (215) 574-9300

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